



Day by Day
with
T. Austin-Sparks

**Spiritual Nuggets
from the Ministry of**

Theodore Austin-Sparks

Day by Day with T. Austin-Sparks

Spiritual Nuggets from the Ministry of Theodore Austin-Sparks

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The First Edition of this book was titled

A Feast of Wines on the Lees

*And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things,
a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well
refined.*

Isaiah 25:6

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Acknowledgements

The golden chord that runs throughout Sparks' books is the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The object of his ministry was to contribute to the Divine end which is presented in the words of Ephesians 4:13-14: *"...till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge (literally full knowledge) of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we be no longer children ..."*

The selections in this book have all been acquired as excerpts of messages by T. Austin-Sparks from the website www.austin-sparks.net.

As posted on their website, "In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks' wishes that what was freely received should be freely given, his writings are not copyrighted. Therefore you are free to use these writings as you are led, however we ask if you choose to share these writings with others, please offer them freely free of changes, free of charge and free of copyright."

A Personal Testimony: From an Unknown Admirer

"Years ago I was unquestionably stretched out to the full for God's best (as I trust I am now), and there was no doubt whatever as to my devotion to the Lord. I was right in the full tide of every kind of evangelical activity, and especially in conventions everywhere for the deepening of spiritual life. I was a member of many Missionary Boards and Committees, and was greatly in demand because it was believed that I was a man with a message. This is putting into very few words an immense amount of truly devoted activity and concern for the Lord's interests. Being a man of prayer, I was open to the Lord for all His will, I believed. But there was a certain realm of things against which I was deeply prejudiced. It was really the very essence of the original 'Keswick' teaching, but I would not have it at any price. I fought it and those who taught it. To make a long story short, the Lord took me seriously in hand along another line, and brought me into great spiritual distress. ... That proved the key to a fuller life and a worldwide ministry. I came to see that my judgment had been wholly wrong, and that I was blinded by prejudice. I believed that I was honest and right, and seemed to have evidence of it; but no, I was, in my ignorance, shutting out something which was of great value to the Lord and to myself. Thank God for the grace to be perfectly honest when the fact of prejudice was brought home to my heart ... No man is infallible, and no one has yet 'apprehended' nor is 'yet perfect.' Many godly men have had to adjust in the presence of fuller light given when a sense of need made such necessary."

July, 1946

Biography of T. Austin Sparks



THEODORE AUSTIN-SPARKS (1888-1971) left behind a treasury of writings filled with the Wisdom, Life and Revelation of Christ. He felt that whatever was given by the One Spirit of God should be freely shared with the One Body of Christ what belongs to the One, belongs to all. He did not want his writings or tapes copyrighted; freely giving to the Body what was freely received from the Head. Having greatly appreciated his writings ourselves, we offer them here on the web for the further establishing and strengthening of the Body, that in all things CHRIST might have the preeminence.

It seems fitting, as the church made its way from the fervency of the Philadelphian era to the indifference and lukewarmness of Laodicia, that God would raise up a voice such as his with a message for the day.

Gene Edward of *Seed Sowers* remarks: "T. Austin-Sparks was one of the great spiritual figures of the twentieth century . . . When the measure of a man's ministry is taken as to how much he exalted Christ, then T. Austin-Sparks is without peer... the golden cord which ran through all his works was the exaltation of his Lord, ... To read Sparks is to discover Christ, as few men have ever known him.

This presentation of his Lord would be enough to make Sparks's ministry unique, but Sparks went on to join the Head to the body (Christ and the church). As surely as his spoken and written ministry exalted the Lord, so also Sparks called forth an almost forgotten centrality of the Church..."

Three Brothers have this to say "Mr. Sparks,' as he was affectionately known, began his long life of Christian service as a Baptist pastor in England, soon coming to be much in demand as a preacher of the Gospel. He also rose to prominence for his interest in and support of evangelistic efforts and missionary outreach. His career, however, took a sharp turn when a physical crisis brought him to a place of inward brokenness and deliverance from his strong prejudice against anything relating to the 'deeper life.' As a result, he joined Jesse Penn-Lewis in her ministry for the spiritual growth of believers, a ministry to which he devoted the remainder of his life and which cost him his reputation and his career in the denominational circles of England. As his teaching began to find acceptance among the Lord's people who were apprehended for the fullness of Christ, its value opened doors worldwide for his messages in both spoken and written form, including the little magazine *A Witness and A Testimony*, which he edited for approximately 50 years."

A Biography of T. Austin Sparks by Leonard Ravenhill

THEODORE AUSTIN SPARKS (1888-1971) was a native of south London, educated there and in Scotland. His father moved in the musical world and had little time for God, but from his mother's side he inherited a long tradition of evangelical Christian faith handed down among Baptists of a Suffolk farming community. He himself however remained unmoved by the Spirit of God until one night, at the age of 17, he was suddenly arrested by the earnest preaching of the gospel in the cold open air of a Glasgow street. That night he went back to his room and gave his life to the Lord. It was a committal from which he never withdrew.

Started in business in Glasgow he engaged also in children's missions and slum work, and gathered a group of friends for Bible study in his home. Soon also he felt the call of God to proclaim the good news of redemption in several small mission halls, there and in and around London. Sensing that he might have a gift from God in this field, but lacking the means to secure a formal training for the ministry, he did the next best thing; he began to read widely, and used his free time to go and hear some of the last of the great turn-of-the-century preachers and Bible expositors. Notable among these were Dr. G. Campbell Morgan of Westminster Chapel, London, and F.B. Meyer, who was to become a firm friend and counselor.

His devotion to God had begun to be recognized and at the age of 25 he was unanimously called to serve a congregational church in Stoke Newington, north of the Thames. He accepted the pastorate at a time when the church was at a low ebb, and was to leave them nine years later, "well-instructed and firmly founded on the ever-enduring truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ." While there, in 1915, he married Florence Rowland, daughter of godly parents, who from then was to prove his lifelong support and spiritual companion.

From Stoke Newington he moved on in 1921 to the charge of Honor Oak Baptist Church in an undistinguished south-east London suburb. It was while here that he began to be more widely known as a gifted and original minister of the Word. His health was never good, but backed by a faithful praying group in his own church he began to travel more widely in Britain.

In 1925 he paid a first visit to the United States as speaker at a Victorious Life Conference in Keswick Grove, New Jersey. He had begun to see, perhaps more clearly than many of his contemporaries, that the cross of Christ is central, not only to world history but also to human experience. To "lose his life" is the disciple's safe but costly way of entry to a service that is marked by eternal gain, and the discovery of this fact explains and gives meaning to so much in life that the Christian otherwise finds difficult. One day in his study, while waiting on God for the needs of His flock, the truth that "it

is no longer I, but Christ who lives in me" dawned freshly upon him with compelling power. Afterwards he often spoke of the "open heaven" beneath which, from that day on, he ministered.

The Baptist congregation grew, but, with his emphasis on the Christian's walk of faith, so too did dissatisfaction with what his deacons began to see as materialist methods of fund-raising favoured at that time by the British Baptist Union who held the church property. Thus it came about that in 1926 they, together with almost the whole congregation, supported a move to a vacant rented property – a school hall and residence – in the same general locality of Honor Oak. His lately redesigned church magazine *A Witness and A Testimony* continued from the new address to be issued bi-monthly, free of subscription, with a modest but increasingly worldwide circulation through until his death in 1971.

The New Christian Fellowship Centre, with its thriving local church and regular week-end conferences and its occasional longer training sessions for young men, became a place of pilgrimage for many. In 1931 this was supplemented by a Scottish summer Conference Centre on the Firth of Clyde at the well-situated house of Heathfield, Kilcreggan.

Meanwhile others of like vision had joined him in the ministry. He had dropped the title "The Reverend," and they shared an ideal of ministers and elders working "together in unity"; though always his unquestioned gift of preaching set him a little apart. A small press was started for publication of the magazine and of collections of his largely unedited spoken messages.

Down the years there were developments in emphasis in the ministry of the Word, "as", in his words, "there should ever be where there is life and growth, provided that the essential foundation remains true and unchanging." So the gospel was faithfully preached, but with it there was a strong emphasis for believers on the life in the Spirit, the eternal purpose of God in His Son, the Christian's spiritual warfare, and the heavenly nature, vocation and destiny of the Church, the Body of Christ.

This last emphasis on a Church-based witness worldwide meant effectually that the missionary vision of the local church at Honor Oak found strong encouragement from, and sympathy with, the rising indigenous movements of the Spirit of God overseas that, for a while during the thirties and forties, seemed a problem to leaders of the old established missionary societies.

As a consequence church prayer meetings, always a mainspring of the local testimony at Honor Oak, now ranged in vision over a wide area of the work of God in the earth. Missionaries went forth to work in fellowship alongside such movements, and Mr.

Austin-Sparks himself was privileged to travel widely in ministry, not only in Europe and North America but also further afield in India and the Far East. Such opportunities for fellowship with those in whom the Spirit of God was doing His own original work were to afford him lifelong joy.

From his early years he had believed in the power and significance of the spoken Word of God, and that all developments of its exposition and application should be vitally related to the actual and growing needs of the spiritual life of representative bodies of God's people. Through His Word God would meet His own, but His way of giving to His servants was not merely through bookish, cloistered or studied matter. Rather it was made necessary, drawn out and given meaning by the call and answer of living conditions. Its value – if it was to be anything more than words – lay in its being able to touch the Lord's people at the point of experience and need which had been the occasion of its original calling forth.

Such was the special calling of T. Austin-Sparks, a man ploughing a furrow perhaps a little apart from his contemporaries, but always true to Christ Jesus his Saviour and Lord, and committed to a vision of spiritually fruitful harvests throughout the whole field that is God's world.

(As submitted by David Ravenhill, from the library of his late father, Leonard Ravenhill)

JANUARY

1 JAN - The Eternal Will and Purpose of God

In outlining and devising His intentions to create and constitute "*all things*" "*in the heavens and upon the earth*" (Eph. 1:10), God was moved and governed by a specific and definite purpose. This "Purpose" is mentioned a number of times in the New Testament, and various things are shown to be related to it. It is most important that we recognize that, however many phases there may be in Divine activity, the purpose of God is one. Nothing is an end in itself. The first law of spiritual fullness is to apprehend the fact and nature of God's all-governing purpose. It is an impressive and painful fact that there is very, very little of what is associated here with the Lord that is really marked by spiritual fullness. Smallness, weakness, limitation, poverty, defeat, ignorance, immaturity, and disappointment characterize so many of the Lord's people, and so much of the Lord's work. This is one of the things that is causing so much distress, inquiry, and effort in some quarters.

To be in the way of fullness it is essential that, in the first place, we recognize and realize that God is not just a Busybody in a large number of good and merciful activities, but that He is wholly occupied with one all-inclusive, and all-related purpose! "*...Who worketh ALL THINGS after the counsel of His own will.*" The measure of ultimate SPIRITUAL attainment and accomplishment will be according to our initial apprehension of a single purpose. When that is established, we shall soon move on to see what the purpose is, and how and by what means it will be realized.

If a master-man has a single purpose to which he has abandoned himself, he will require that all who work for him are not just doing various things, however good they may be, even as parts of his whole work, but that they are seeing beyond their own job and part to the whole end and object, and are working positively to that. He will be favourable to any who come to work for him and to any means employed, only in so far as the full purpose is in the Son.

2 JAN - A Revelation of What the Church Really Is

God's method and means of fulfilling His eternal purpose is by way of "*the church, which is His (Christ's) body*". The Church is definitely stated to be "*the fullness of Him that filleth all in all*". That universal fullness of Christ is determined to be revealed and expressed in and through a vessel called *the Church*. What is this Church?

Firstly, it is said to be an elect company of people. Leaving all theories of election, let us be content, for the moment, to see that God has eternally determined to have such a company, and that election is related to purpose, not primarily if at all to salvation. God knows, He cannot help knowing, the ultimate reactions of people to His presentations, and according to His foreknowledge He has foreordained to His purpose. But God has never said to any unsaved person that he or she is so foreordained. He only calls. The Church is the company of the called who obeyed.

Secondly, the Church is something greater than the churches. The Church is essentially a spiritual thing; not sectarian, denominational, "ecclesiastical," traditional, etc. It is the spiritual relatedness as of a living organism; a body possessing one life; it is a single entity, an "all one in Christ". The measure of light does not make for a more or less membership of that Body, although that may affect functioning. The apprehension of "Church Truth" does not constitute Church membership, although it will greatly affect the matter of fullness. Vital relatedness to Christ is the basis of Body actuality.

But when we have said that, we must point out how important the recognition of the Church is. Next to the revelation of Christ personally in His greatness, the revelation of the Church is bound up with our practical progress toward fullness. Paul has a far greater fullness in his writings than any other Apostle, and this is mainly due to the specific revelation of the Church which was given to him. What arises from this revelation is that Christ and the Church are one, as Head and members of one Body.

3 JAN - The Church to Be In

God's purpose is to sum up all things in Christ. It is a Person filled full, enlarged, and all-comprehending. The greatness, the magnificence, the universal fullness of Christ is God's goal. Again, it is not sufficient that we see the purpose, basic as that is, but that we see in an ever growing way the fullness of Christ. There must be an initial seeing of this greatness, this majesty, this glory, this universality. It was such a seeing that accounted for the power, effectiveness, and glory of the Church's first days. That was the meaning of "Pentecost". It was such a seeing that made the Apostles the men that they were. Paul owed everything to God's revealing of His Son in him. But that seeing must go on. It must become ever fuller. We must not just date our seeing of Christ to some past experience. It is the Lord's will that we shall so live in and walk by the Spirit that we are able to say that what we see of Christ today is infinitely greater and more wonderful than ever it has been. That is only in line with God's purpose, and it is so for all who have truly come into a spiritual apprehension thereof.

We must then see that the Apostles never set out with any plan to form churches. That was the spontaneous result of the Holy Spirit's work in every place. Christ was preached and accepted, and relatedness spontaneously followed (see Acts 2:42). That which decides churches is Christ. This is the solution of and the answer to many of the problems and questions which arise, especially in this Western world in these peculiarly complicated times. What is to be our guiding and deciding principle in gathering together? It is to be Christ! We meet on that ground alone. Where God's end is most fully in view, and what provides most fully for its attainment the fullness of Christ decides where we ought to be, and no one ought to quarrel with that.

4 JAN - His Fullness Is Linked to the Church

Next to the revelation of Christ personally in His greatness, the revelation of the Church is bound up with our practical progress toward fullness. Paul has a far greater fullness in his writings than any other Apostle, and this is mainly due to the specific revelation of the Church which was given to him. What arises from this revelation is that Christ and the Church are one, as Head and members of one Body.

There are one or two things which arise for our apprehension in this matter. Firstly there is the fact so clearly and fully given in the Scriptures that God has just as definitely chosen and appointed the Church for the realization of His eternal purpose as He has chosen and appointed His Son. He has just as positively bound Himself and His fullness to the one as to the other. While one is subject to the other, and the medium and vessel of the other as the wife to the husband (Eph. 5:22-24), they are one in the matter of purpose. This carries with it the jealousy of God for His Church, and means that for fullness there can be no allowing of an ignoring, belittling, or injuring.

Further; God will keep strictly in the matter of spiritual fullness to working Bodywise. That is, it is not possible for any units as such to know fullness. Fullness is a related matter. *"The Church is the fullness of Him."* No individual can be that. Therefore spiritual oneness, interrelatedness, fellowship, mutuality, and interdependence are basic and indispensable to spiritual attainment of full-growth. *"Till we all attain unto... a full grown man, unto... the fullness of Christ"* (Eph. 4:13).

In the Old Testament, when things were constituted according to the heavenly pattern, God spoke out of the Tent of Meeting. So it is in the New Testament. For the answer to his inquiry on the Damascus Road, Paul had to go into the city and get it as out from the Church. For the entering upon his great life-work he had to abide in the Church at Antioch and get his commission confirmed there (Acts 13). We are speaking here of spiritual fullness, and our ministry is concerned with that. It is not a committee, "General," "Executive," or "Advisory," but the "Body" in representation and spiritual functioning that is God's ordained way.

5 JAN - The Local Church is God's Training Ground

In the beginning when the church gathered it was just a matter of only believers and non-believers. Today numerous other questions arise; such as "Connection," "Order," "Practice," "Belief," etc. But there are one or two things which must still govern this matter. They are: The local church or assembly is intended to be locally all that the Church as a whole is universally. It must not be smaller in its vision, its vocation, its relatedness. Though locally placed, it is universal in nature, outreach, concern, and function. If it lives unto itself it will die. Fullness is dependent upon its spiritual length and breadth, and height and depth.

The local church is the spiritual training-ground for all usefulness to the Lord. There all the essential lessons are learned, not by teaching alone, but by spiritual discipline. The very vital lesson of subjection to the Lord which means so much in the matter of spiritual growth is learned in a very practical way in a true assembly and fellowship life. All independent, unrelated, and merely personal life is impossible when the "Body" is truly recognized.

The matter of pre-eminent importance in the local church, as in the universal, is the absolute sovereign headship of Christ. Anything which usurps this, or in any way conflicts with it, will most certainly result in spiritual limitation and proportionate retarding of growth. Is this not why, in the New Testament churches, no one man exercised headship, but elders – not *an* elder – were appointed.

The "Body" principle is upheld in the corporate, and individual sovereignty is prevented. At Antioch the *"Holy Spirit said"* to a company of representative men, who were together in spiritual responsibility. Eldership is representation of *spiritual* measure, not *ecclesiastical*. The New Testament plurality of eldership means that the church is brought as in and by its representatives under the complete sovereignty of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

6 JAN - The Majority Cannot Go This Way

Many may agree with much that we have written, but they will react to it by saying that it is "idealistic"; it is too high; as things are now it is not possible; we cannot hope for such a recovery. Well, there is one answer to that attitude. The Bible has always recognized and provided for a position like that. It was but a small number of the captive nation of Israel who returned voluntarily to rebuild the city, the wall, the house at Jerusalem, and the word which governed and characterized them was, "Whoso is of a willing heart, his God be with him".

In the Book of the Revelation it is clear that the majority had left the full thought of the Lord. The appeal there is to those within who have "an ear to hear". We find them called "Overcomers," and this clearly relates to the decadent conditions; a reaction to the Lord's full and original thought. It is hardly to be expected that all Christians will respond to the appeal and standard, but it is clear that they can, the Lord wills it, and what He wills is not out of the question. It may be a costly way; and the cost will be mainly acute because of the attitude of other Christians.

Hence, we realize that a true ministry will sift the Lord's people, and only those who really mean business with God and to "go on to full growth" will have a place for it. Our message is therefore one which will affect the "Overcomers," although we do not regard them as an elect of the elect, a select spiritual aristocracy. They will have a place of special honour because in them the Lord will have that upon which His heart has been set from the beginning. The difference will be that which is seen ultimately between Joseph and his brethren.

7 JAN - Ministry Cannot Be 'Joined' or 'Taken Up'

A true ministry will be the outcome of His very deep and drastic dealings with us. It is not something studied and worked out mentally. We shall never be off the wheel as a vessel finished, but somehow the Lord will combine the molding and the using. Surely this is as it should be.

"The Lord's messenger *in* the Lord's message" contains the vital principle that the instrument should never be in advance of its spiritual history. Even prophets who spoke of things to come, and of many things the meaning of which was not fully clear to them, were made to have their ministry inwrought by practical experience. But the drastic handling is ever unto increase and progress.

Such a ministry cannot be "taken up," or adopted. We cannot go into it as we go into any other kind of work, by technical or intellectual training or instruction. Indeed, it is something from which to shrink naturally, as did Moses, Jeremiah, and others. It is helpful and interesting or enlightening to see that, when the Lord spoke through Jeremiah to Israel about the potter's house, and the potter, and then Himself took the place of the potter, the molding, shaping, correcting, adjusting, purging, unto usefulness was by means of the assaults and inflicting of enemy activity. There was a connection between the Potter's hands and a foreign ruler's opposition and besieging. So for fuller usefulness the Lord uses the enemy and his work, and we are not for long free from this pressure.

These, then, are the main things to which we are called and committed. "Here we stand, we can do no other; God help us."

The Lord give you all a heart to "*follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth,*" and to reach unto His fullness.

8 JAN - The Cross Is Linked to His Fullness

The Cross of Christ is deeply bound up with the question of Divine fullness. Everything that carries with it the idea of our doing anything and making ourselves anything to obtain the mercy of God and attain unto acceptance with Him, bears the hallmark of the Devil himself. Christ's death for us and our death with Him is the only, but the sure, ground of full acceptance! Luther said it very utterly when he put it thus "O Christ, I am Thy sin, Thy curse, Thy wrath of God, Thy hell; and contrariwise, Thou art my righteousness, my blessing, my life, my grace of God, my heaven." No wonder the Devil hated Martin Luther and assailed him so bitterly.

But there is not only the basic, initial, perfect value of the Cross for our full and unquestioned acceptance; there is a meaning of the Cross in relation to spiritual fullness and fruitfulness. It is what Paul calls "*Being made conformable to His death*" (Phil. 3:10).

How very much of the tragedy, scandal, defeat, weakness, deadness, limitation and unloveliness of many Christian people and Christian institutions, communities and churches is due to uncrucified "flesh" or natural life! How greatly Christ is hidden from view by men and things and methods which bring themselves into prominence! The need, if He is to come to the place of the Divine intention, and we with Him, is for a continuous and ever-deepening working of the Cross in us.

We really must be in a position to say "*I have been crucified with Christ*". Yes, but also to complete the statement "*It is no longer I, but Christ.*" Is it true "*No longer I?*" "*No... I?*" That is what Paul meant, but who can know the depth of that "*I*". Only Christ knows how deep and thorough His Cross is, and we must hand ourselves over to Him for the Holy Spirit to work all His meaning of the Cross in us if the way is to be clear for His fullness.

So the twofold meaning and message of the Cross is a very strong part of EVERY ministry. There are many who do not like the latter "*It is no longer I*" and will not have it.

9 JAN - "Afterward that which is Spiritual"

The Apostle says much about the spiritual side of things (1 Cor. 15), and amongst those statements he says concerning the body that not that which is spiritual is first but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. We might observe, by the way, that when he used that word "*natural*" he really used the word "*soulical*." That which is first is the soulical body and afterward that which is spiritual, indicating that the ultimate and final thought of God is the spiritual. The Apostle leads on very clearly to show that this body, this soulical body as such, is going to be changed. But there is a germ – the spirit is the germ of a new body, and that spirit will be clothed with a spiritual body. It is something that we cannot wholly understand, but we can see something of what it is like when we remember that the forty days after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus were used precisely for this very purpose to demonstrate and establish the nature of a spiritual man in his final and full constitution, visibly, as well as spiritually.

There is no doubt that in those forty days the Apostles were convinced that Jesus was alive, that they had seen the Lord; they were left without a shadow of doubt – nothing could shake them on that matter. But what a Lord, what a difference! An absence altogether of some things with which they were familiar. He was there, and He was there in a positive presence, not a ghost, not a disembodied spirit, but a full Manhood; and yet how different! He was using the forty days to show what the end of God is for man, the nature of things when God reaches His end. "*Afterward that which is spiritual...*" God's final, ultimate thought is the spiritual, and I want to emphasize that for this purpose I am not talking about atmospheres, things floating in the air, but about something very real if I may use the word, very concrete when I talk about spirituality. It is something very practical. The Lord Jesus sought surely to show that after His resurrection.

"*Children, have ye any meat?*" He can make a fire of coals, He can cook fish on it, He can break the food and distribute it and He can eat with them, and yet in a moment can be out of sight. Dismissing time and geography, He is in one place and then in another far off, but He is real. Do not let us think we are talking about spirituality as something unpractical, mythical, abstract. We are going to see that it is a very practical matter; first that which is natural, and afterward, as the final thought and the goal of God's activities, that which is spiritual. The end and the eternal will be spirituality; we shall be in the full sense spiritual. Well, that is a general statement.

10 JAN - God's End Does Not Lie in Temporal Things

A temporal thing is only a shadow of another, it has no abiding qualities or values in itself. It is governed by the law of vanity, vanity meaning simply that it cannot of itself realize its own destiny. It will reach a point, and from that point turn back and in upon itself; its efforts, its groanings, its travailings, never issue in a final realization of its intention. Nothing of it, by its own properties, can realize Divine purposes and ends. It is very important to recognize this.

Oh, how many things are gathered into organized Christianity with the idea of making for effectiveness! The idea is that, if you can have these things, you are going to get results. Money – Oh, how much could be done if only we had money! We must have the money! I ask you, how was it in the book of the Acts? Was anything done? With all the money today, how much is done of an abiding, eternal, spiritual value? If only you can get names and titles on your programs and advertisements, you are going to effect something! Are you? If you can get reputation, scholarship, learning, ability, physical strength, business acumen, the work will be effected! Will it?

I want to say that not in one of these things, nor in all of them put together, in themselves, is there any spiritual value, and there can be a very vast amount of spiritual value without any of them. God has taken pains along both lines to prove that. Along the line of their presence in abundance He has proved their spiritual futility; and along the line of taking the weak things and the despised and the foolish and the things which are not, by something which was nothing in itself He has through the ages demonstrated His own power and done mightily fruitful things for eternity. Well, that is simple and obvious, and it is only one more contribution to this fact, that it is spirituality that counts, that is the effective thing, the thing that gets through, and nothing else. The learning, the money, and all the other things may have a place, provided they do not govern, provided they are subservient to what is spiritual and are never banked upon as the things which are going to do the work, provided it is never assumed that if you have these things, a great work for God can be done; God will make evident the folly of that assumption.

11 JAN - Spirituality is the Door to God

A spiritual state is the key to all that is of God. Spirituality is the door, and the key to the door, beyond which lies everything that relates to God. Without spirituality, there is no way through, the door is closed. The word "cannot" stands written as an impassable barrier *"cannot understand or receive the things of the Spirit of God."* In reality, our lives are set in a realm of things spiritual. God is Spirit, therefore the supreme Reality, the supreme factor, the ultimate environment of this universe; God is Spirit. Man, in the deepest and truest nature of his being, is spirit. He *has* a soul and a body. Evil forces in great power encircle man on this earth, and they are spiritual forces. But more, the entire temporal order is constituted upon spiritual principles and meanings. The visible things are but symbols of spiritual things; the seen things are types of unseen things. God has constituted this whole universe, in every aspect and detail, upon a basis of spiritual principles; they are tokens of something more than themselves. If God, Who is Spirit, makes anything, He makes it with a meaning, and that meaning is given to it by the mind of God. It takes its deepest significance from God Himself, therefore its deepest significance is spiritual.

We know how, right through the Bible, these things of creation are used to represent spiritual things. The sun, the moon, the stars, and every other created thing embodies some spiritual thought, meaning and law, so that, when we come to the revelation of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, we find a whole comprehensive and detailed counterpart in a spiritual realm of what we have in the temporal realm; a new creation in Christ Jesus with its initiation by God, Who said, *"Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.* (2 Cor. 4:6). Here is the new creation act, the new fiat for bringing in a spiritual order, which, in a spiritual way, reproduces all the laws which lie behind the creation of the natural order. It is a very strong and very full realm by which we can recognize really what God is after through and in and by all things.

12 JAN - Discriminating Between Spiritual Gifts and Persons

There was at Corinth the spiritual inability to discriminate between spiritual gifts and spiritual persons. In 1 Cor., it is clear that spiritual gifts are not necessarily evidence of people being spiritual – that you can, in this real sense, be a very unspiritual person and have spiritual gifts. You will find that spiritual gifts may, and very often do, only relate to spiritual infancy, and not to spiritual maturity. The possession of such gifts may run side by side in the same life with very serious moral defects. This is a problem, this is startling. But it was so at Corinth. They could not see the difference between spiritual gifts and spiritual persons.

Why should Paul head this whole matter of gifts right up into chapter 13? What is the meaning of chapter 13 if it is not this? "*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal.*" Is he suggesting an impossible thing? Is this a merely hypothetical conjecture which has no reality in life or experience that a man can speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, and, being like that, be sounding brass or a clanging cymbal? Speaking with tongues – surely tongues are the ultimate thing, a great evidence of spirituality? Not at all! The supreme feature of spirituality is Divine love. God is love, and we are to be made perfect in love. "*Faith which worketh by love*" (Gal. 5:6) – this is maturity and this is spirituality. "*I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual.*"

So he heads this whole thing right up through gifts to love, which is spirituality. He says, I may have all these gifts, and yet may be an unspiritual person. The gifts may only be marks of my spiritual infancy. I am not saying that that is necessarily so. Paul said that he spoke with tongues more than they all. But spiritual gifts and spirituality do not necessarily go together. That is the point. Spiritual maturity did not go hand in hand with their gifts at Corinth. They thought that the gifts meant much more than they did mean, that they were the evidences of great spiritual measure. They did not see. There is a lot of difference between inward formation and merely outward action.

Well then, in Corinth, spirituality meant a heavenly standard of wisdom and power; the Body as a unified whole; and spiritual measure inward more than spiritual gifts outward. That is spirituality.

13 JAN - God's Mind about the Church

In the Divine scheme of things it is the Church which is the intermediary, that which stands between and has the ultimate effect in the spiritual realm. I mean that individual Christians, though they may be born again, as individuals will not get very far in touching that outermost realm of spiritual forces. There, a real registration has to be a corporate one. It will be the Church eventually which will be the instrument of Divine government in this universe.

Here spirituality means what the Church is in God's mind. When we come to contemplate the Church in its wholeness and entirety, of course, we come mainly to the letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. There we find God's mind about the Church. We must realize the necessity for our seeing and apprehending what the Church is in God's mind, not as we find it in the churches, not as it actually is here; and we must stand on that ground, or we shall be helpless in this matter of spiritual impact. I mean that if we are going to accept what we find in the New Testament as to the churches as being the expression of all there is, we are very soon going to give up the fight, and shall not get very far.

Dr. Campbell Morgan has remarked that there is often heard the word 'Oh, let us get back to the New Testament church!' But, he said, 'God forbid!' And went on to say that you will look a long way today for a Christian church that will wholly correspond in its defects to the church in Corinth. When you come to think of it, there is some truth in that – a church in which there is incest and all that you find in Corinth! God forbid that we get back to the New Testament church if that is it! God forbid that we should say that we have made no progress from that! If we are going to accept that as the standard, we are going to be crippled, and the measure of our spirituality will be very small indeed, and therefore the measure of our impact likewise. The Apostle who was mainly responsible for these churches coming into being repudiated their condition, would not accept it, was fighting against it. Why? Because he had seen God's mind; that was his position, his vantage ground, his strength. If he had never seen God's mind and only saw this, what a disheartened, disappointed, despairing man he would be! He had seen God's mind about it.

14 JAN - Spiritual Ascendancy Demands Faith

Now, let me say further and again, things that are seen, things that happen, are not alone, they have spiritual factors behind them. Oh, young people, try to get hold of this. Ask the Lord to help you to get this really registered in your hearts, not as a part of your religious education or information, but really as a working principle in your lives. Your difficult situations, hold-ups, frustrations — they are not just alone by themselves. If you are a child of God, there is a spiritual factor and a spiritual intelligence behind, and you will never get through until you can get behind the thing and deal with that spiritual factor; until you know how to deal with the enemy, the things will not be loosened. The Lord's answer to these challenges may not always be in the same way, but always on one certain principle.

Paul said, *"I would have you know that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel"* (Phil. 1:12). That is one way in which the Lord answers the enemy. He sovereignly turns the work of the Devil to His own glory and to the fulfilment of the very thing which the Devil intended to prevent. The Lord's answer is not always in the direct way of casting out the Devil, nor a direct rebuke that brings the enemy's work to naught or stops him from working. The Lord very often allows him to work but answers him in many ways, and the ultimate issue is with the Lord, not the Devil. But always the Lord works to one principle, and that is the principle of our faith.

Paul met the situation; he saw and felt the things that were happening. Do you think that in his heart he capitulated to Satan and said, The Devil has things in his own hand, it is of no use our trying to do anything? Not a bit! Paul's attitude was the Devil sees we are having some success and he is working; he is apparently doing a lot of harm, but the issue of this thing will be with the Lord and not with the Devil. So, because of an attitude taken like that on the part of His servant, the Lord was constantly, in different ways, answering the Devil and getting the issue into His own hands. But the instrument of the Lord in defeating and casting down the Devil was the spirit of the servant of God standing strongly and you do marvel how strongly Paul's spirit stood. Though Satan often seemed to have things his way, in the end the Lord triumphed every time.

15 JAN - The Answer to Satan through the Spirit

When we speak of spiritual warfare, let us not think in terms of the abstract. "*They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb.*" What do you take that to mean? — that they were a people of a phraseology about the blood and they started hurling their phraseology at the Devil? Well, phraseology, even about the Blood, has no effect on him. "*They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb.*" Whom did they overcome? The Accuser of the brethren, who accused them day and night. How do you overcome an accuser? Only by having a better case than he has. You have to have a good case, and the Blood of the Lamb represents that in a mighty way. Our legal standing because of the Blood of the Lamb puts the enemy out of court if only faith will hold to it. And we must not think in geographical terms of Satan being cast down from somewhere high up and coming crashing to the earth. This is spiritual warfare. We have to get this spiritual sense and idea of things. Our soulical mentality is always drawing pictures of places, positions, spaces, but we have to understand that this is a spiritual matter that Satan can, in effect, be cast from the highest heights to the lowest depths without any geographical factor coming in at all.

You may have a person against you who lays a charge at your door, and thinks he has a very strong case. But you happen to have a case which undercuts that and tears it to pieces, and he goes down before you in utter collapse; he comes from a tremendous soul height to a very great depth. That is not a geographical thing but a spiritual. This is spiritual warfare, not geographical. "*Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood*" (Eph. 6:12), it is not in the realm of the physical and geographical at all. It is spiritual; you can call it moral if you like and the Blood represents a legal case, and Satan can be cast down from heaven countless times in one day. You cannot do that literally; it can only be understood spiritually. A million people all over this earth may cast him down in one day at different moments of the day. As they stand by faith on the case that the Blood provides, they have a mighty and triumphant answer. That is how spirituality works out in warfare. Christ works spirit-wise. Soul cannot cast out soul, and the soul cannot cast out the Devil because the Devil has already got it in his hand. Satan has obtained ground in our souls, but in our renewed, born-again spirits he has no place. The evil spirit behind everything can only be overcome by a spirit strengthened with might by the Spirit of God, and that means by a subduing of the soul to the spirit.

16 JAN - Counterfeit Spirituality

There is a false and counterfeit spirituality which is purely soulical. It looks like spirituality, and passes for it, it assumes to be spiritual; but it is false, it is counterfeit. We find it in mysticism, and mysticism can go a very long way to simulate what is spiritual. Aestheticism so often looks like spirituality and has been mistaken for it. There is a vast amount of religion that thinks it is spiritual and claims to be, and yet it is purely aesthetic or mystical or soulical; it is not spiritual at all. There is a soulical insight which is the counterfeit of spiritual apprehension. It is purely psychic.

There are people with phraseology and they are not clear, they are involved, and what are they after? They are trying to be spiritual on the basis of revelation, seeing things no one else sees or can see. Be careful! The enemy does simulate every truth in order to destroy the truth. We have to be in a true position, and there is this counterfeit, mystical interpretation. You can drive typology to an extreme, you can force it to a point where it loses its value and becomes almost ridiculous. Spiritual discernment is counterfeited, and shows itself along the line of premonitions and second sight; it is all soulical. Consecration is often counterfeited by asceticism, a false consecration. The monasticism of the Middle Ages and what remains of it is a false interpretation of spirituality, of consecration.

Therefore test things, give them time, take them into another atmosphere and see how they live. It is so easy to get into a false position when there is a hothouse condition, you can get a lot of things springing up rapidly and seeming to be genuine growths. But take them outside and they shrivel up. The things of God do not do that, they survive all atmospheres, they live though death encompasses. His life is not a prey to earthly conditions; it triumphs. Everything can be counterfeited, and there is a counterfeit spirituality along every line.

17 JAN - Spirituality is the Law of Life

Spirituality rightly understood is the secret of all that belongs to God. At the very beginning of our life with God, we have to be reconstituted as spiritual beings. *"That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* *"He that is spiritual..."* *"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."* But there is a false thing to counterfeit and simulate spirituality, and it is not objective to ourselves; it is made out of ourselves. We make gods after our own likeness, our souls produce their own system, even in religion; and the Spirit produces His system.

Note the difference, then, between what is truly spiritual and what is falsely so. Let me say without any hesitation, the measure of external ritual and formalism and that sort of thing determines the measure of spirituality. The more you have of that, the less you have of true spiritual life, of real spiritual food. A real life with the Lord is something very simple, shorn of all the art of religion; a few children of God gathered together in something which has no ecclesiastical traditions, no religious embellishments, no external forms, but just a simple meeting in the Name of the Lord. There you have life, power, fullness. I am not saying that things must be shoddy in order to have spirituality. I am saying that the law of life is spirituality.

Said the woman to the Master, *"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."* The Lord Jesus said, *"Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father... God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:20-24). That is only saying, This Mount Gerizim and its temple and the temple in Jerusalem are purely temporal, earthly, the things of men's souls. Men must have something to see, to handle, something they can appreciate by their soul faculties, but that is not the realm of things since I, the Lord, have come. That is the natural, it is past. Now, the spiritual comes neither here nor there, not a matter of place or things or anything like that on the earth. It is in spirit with the Father.

18 JAN - The Heavenliness of the Church

In the letter to the Ephesians, the constant repetition is "*in the heavenlies in Christ.*" We must seek to dismiss our natural, soulical mentality about that. I am not saying that there is no such place as a geographical heaven, but we must rule out that kind of mentality of geography, and realize that "*in the heavenlies*" is a spiritual principle first of all before it is anything else, and that, while it may mean that Christ is in a certain geographical location, yet spiritually it signifies a realm altogether outside of this world order. You know quite well that two people can be side by side, as close as two can be, and yet they may be in absolutely different realms. That is the principle of heavenliness; it refers to a different spiritual realm altogether. True, it is above, elevated, higher, but that is spiritual first of all before it is anything else. It is a spiritual difference on an altogether higher level of Divine thought not of this order, not, as we say, earthbound; it is heavenly, it is in a spiritual sense *in the heavenlies in Christ*. You can sit in your chair and be in the heavenlies. I am not talking about the psychic now, but the real spiritual enjoyment of the Lord so that we forget the people around us; we are, to all intents and purposes, somewhere else.

The church is a heavenly thing from God's standpoint, and it is dynamic when we have really seen it. When really it has come home to us in the power of the Holy Spirit it is dynamic, because it results in tremendous things in us first of all. Oh, what that revelation has done with some of us! When ours was an earthly conception of the Church, how we were engrossed with its ecclesiasticism, its forms and procedure! The whole system of things meant a lot to us. Then God broke in with His conception of the Church as a heavenly thing, and all this fell from us like a mantle; it went, and from that time to this we have felt how futile and petty it all is. But that does not happen until you have seen in your heart; and I beg of you, do not go and do things merely because you hear these things said. Ask the Lord for the revelation. Once you see God's mind about the Church as a heavenly thing, it is emancipating, it makes tremendous challenges within and without and puts you in a place of being able to minister in a way that meets need, brings in heavenly fullness, and God comes through. In a word, it results in spiritual increase to have really seen the heavenly nature of the Church.
(From *The Church in the Spiritual Realm*)

19 JAN - The True Nature of Christianity

"We... are transformed into the same image" (that is: 'We pass from one form to another') 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Well now, what is the point of focus here? "*We are transformed...*", and it is the present active tense: '*We are being transformed*'; '*We are in a process of transformation, passing from one form to another.*' There is a sense in which that fragment, that condensed verse put into those few words, touches the heart of the whole New Testament and explains everything.

The process of transformation talks of a former state and a latter state. Transformation is built around two contrasted words mentioned in this second chapter. Those two contrasted words describe two different types of humanity, two different manhoods, and between the two, firmly and squarely the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is planted.

There is a cleavage cut by the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ between those two which separates them and makes them two different species of mankind. That truth follows right through this Letter. The Apostle here speaks about a foundation and a building. He says: "*Let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ*", and then he drives the wedge of the Cross right into the superstructure and speaks of one kind of work or works, which are the product of one type of man, or Christian, and another kind of work, or works, which are the product of another kind. The first will go up in flames and will never be found in eternity. It has gone forever. The second will abide. It will abide the fire of judgment and the test of time, and be found in the ultimate structure, or building of God. These are not non-Christians. What an immense amount is being built upon Christ that is going up in smoke! Every man's work will be tried by fire, and its real value and its endurance will be determined by and will depend upon where it comes from, that is, from which of these two types of manhood. The two words which define the two types of manhood are "*the natural man... he that is spiritual.*" There are the two words: *the natural* and *the spiritual* CHRISTIANS--the natural Christian must be transformed into the spiritual Christian by the Cross of the Lord.

20 JAN - The Fallacy of Intellectualism

Intellectualism is fundamentally the wisdom of this world. That is the thing that was underscored as a part of the trouble in Corinth; the control of intellectualism, the natural reason, the natural mind, the idea that you are going to solve the problems of life along intellectual lines. Will you tell me that that is not a peril of Christianity today? Why, it is everywhere! It shouts at you from the religious circles. All this terrific effort to solve the problems of Christianity by the human intellect; the research, argument, discussion and debate, theses, etc.; philosophical Christianity trying to solve spiritual problems; what a weariness it is! It is thought that if you go to our seats and seminaries of learning with a clever brain, able to put out a convincing argument, you are going to save souls. There never was a greater fallacy!

The Letter to the Corinthians says that. Paul was an educated man, so much so that for two thousand years the best scholars have found him defeating them, and they have not mastered him yet!

1 Cor. 2:1-4 "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

What was Paul's conclusion? 'It is no use, however much I may have of the schools, whatever I may know, however I might be able to argue with the Corinthians or the Athenians on Mars Hill, I will get nowhere along that line with a spiritual situation like this. I have made up my mind about that.' It is part of the natural man to think that you are going to be able to build up something by intellectual, scholastic, academic acumen. The fact is that what intellect can build up, intellect can pull down! The man of soul and the man of spirit are always in conflict. Who is going to have the upper hand, the mastery, in every one of us? The two are in each person.

21 JAN - The Worldliness of the Church

"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you..."
(Galatians 4:19)

Christ formed in you — that is my concern, he says that is what weighs with me... not extensiveness, not bigness, not popularity, not keeping in with the world, so that it is said that this is a successful ministry and a successful movement. That is worldliness. I am dead to all that; I am crucified with Christ to all that. The thing that matters is Christ — the measure of Christ in you.

You see how the world can creep in... and how worldly we can become almost imperceptibly by taking account of things outwardly — of how men will think and talk, what they will say, the attitude they will take of the measure of our popularity; the talk of our success. That is all the world, says the Apostle, the spirit of the world; that is how the world talks. Those are the values in the eyes of the world, but not in the eyes of the risen Christ. In the new creation, on the resurrection side of the Cross, one thing alone determines value... and that is the measure of Christ in everything. Nothing else is of value at all, however big the thing may be, however popular it may be, however men talk favorably of it; on the resurrection side that does not count a little bit. What counts is how much of Christ there is.

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

You and I in the Cross of the Lord Jesus must come to the place where we are crucified to all those other elements. Ah, you may be unpopular, and the work be very small; there may be no applause, and the world may despise; but in it all there may be something which is of Christ, and that is the thing upon which our hearts must be set. The Lord gives us grace for that crucifixion. There are few things more difficult to bear than being despised; but He was despised and rejected of men. What a thing is in God's sight must be our standard. That is a resurrection standard. Now that is the victory of the Cross.

22 JAN - The Greatness of the Church

Not many in the House of God realize that the church is more than an institution, an organization, a place to gather on Sundays, a social structure for marriages, baptism and funerals. Tradition of the church as we know it has watered down the church to something that is earthly and mundane, lacking in true spiritual content and substance. The majority of Christians go to church in response to their understanding of church doctrines, rituals,

Now the greatness of the Church is here, that God has ordained and appointed that the Church now, in this dispensation, should be as the living Person of the Lord: where He can be found, where He can be met, where He can be touched, where He makes self-manifestation. Rome has the 'truth' regarding this, but has dragged it down on to a temporal, worldly level; but nevertheless the fact remains, He is found there, in the Church, and only in the Church. "*Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them*" (Matt. 18:20). God can be met, found, touched there; there is the vehicle of His manifestation. So the Church is called to be here in this dispensation, and in the ages to come, the very Body through which God in Christ manifests Himself, makes Himself known. Is that the Church that we know, that is commonly called the Church? (Oh, no! But that is God's thought, and how different!).

The true Church is nothing less, in the intention of God, than Christ Himself present and going on with His work, now without those earthly limitations of His life before His death and resurrection. The Christ risen, ascended and exalted in all the fullness which God has put in, is now in the true Church, and that Church exists. I say, you cannot identify it; you can only see where two or three are gathered. You cannot say of this or that or some other thing called 'the Church' that that is the Church. No, the true Church is still this mysterious thing. It is Christ in active expression. How great is the Church if it is Christ! I say, we can only state the facts. There they are. What we have to do next is to pray to the Lord: O Lord, reveal the true Church and save me from the caricature!

23 JAN - The First Step in a Christian's Life

Were I asked what I considered to be a need which embraces the greatest number of vital issues amongst the Lord's people, I should sum it up in one word, "vision," vision God-given. If you reflect for a few moments you will see that the Bible is almost entirely a matter of vision, that the whole of the New Testament Christianity is a matter of vision, that all Christian life and service which is that in truth is a matter of vision.

Vision, of course, has two parts. It means something seen, and it also means a capacity for seeing; something presented to be seen, and the power of seeing that which is presented. That is vision. There may be a vision in the first sense which is not seen, a presentation not discerned. It would be very difficult indeed to estimate the value and the importance of vision Divinely given.

In the New Testament another word is used for vision. It is the word "revelation." That is a very comprehensive word. No matter at what point we touch the New Testament Christian life we touch vision or revelation.

The initiation, or the initiatory stage, of the Christian life in the New Testament is seen to be a matter of revelation or vision. It is a presentation to the heart and a heart apprehension of the Lord Jesus, and unless that is the nature of the beginning of the Christian life there is something essential and vital lacking. Any Christian life which is simply a matter of giving a mental assent to certain propositions of Christian truth, and the writing down of the name, for instance, upon a slip of paper, saying that you become a Christian, lacks something which is essential to make that Christian life a mighty force. In the New Testament the beginnings of the Christian life are a revelation of Christ to the heart, and a heart apprehension of Him. It is a matter of inward spiritual vision. It may be of a very elementary character; it may be very imperfect so far as the fullness of Christ is concerned; but it is sufficient for its immediate purpose, and it is tremendously real to those who have it; to those who are able to say in any form of words: I have come to see the Lord Jesus as my Saviour! When that can be said in reality it represents vision, if it is the vision of the heart.

24 JAN - The Need for an Ever-Enlarging Vision

When you touch the beginnings of Christian life in the New Testament you are touching vision. But when you touch the continuance of Christian life in the New Testament you are also touching vision. The continuance of Christian life is the development, the increase, the progress, which means the greater fulnesses of Christ; and whenever you touch some fuller meaning of Christ in the New Testament, whenever you come to some progress, some movement, some advance, some development, some increase, you will always find it is by fresh vision or revelation. It is a further unveiling, a fuller revelation. It is a new heart apprehension of something presented, and something seen by the enablement of the Holy Spirit. It is so different from merely an intellectual grasp of Christian doctrine, which may fall altogether short of that dynamic power of enlarging the spiritual life. True progress as we find it in the New Testament is on the basis of a fresh revelation, a fuller revelation, a new vision. So that the true, living believer marks his or her progress by being able to say, as at the beginning, I have come to see the Lord in a new way, in a fuller way; and that with the eyes of the heart being enlightened.

What is true of the initiation and the continuation is true of the consummation of the spiritual life. If you touch the consummation of the spiritual life in the New Testament you find it has to do with an unveiling of Jesus Christ. What is the consummation of the spiritual life? It is His appearing, and with His appearing there is closely and inseparably linked the completing of our spiritual progress.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God." That is the initiation.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall be manifested we also shall be manifested with him... we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." That is the consummation of the spiritual life.

We shall be like Him because we shall see Him. There is a marvelous changing power in seeing the Lord from the beginning to the end.

25 JAN - Emancipation from All that is Less than the Lord

Vision is the background, the foundation, the basis of life and service in relation to the Lord Jesus. Vision has a wonderful power amongst the Lord's people. One of the effects of true vision, God-given vision, is to emancipate them from all that is less than the Lord, and that is no small effect. It is an emancipating power. This is where vision is needed so badly today. The Lord's people are so cramped, so small, so narrow, so bound, so shut in, hedged in, so parochial in their spiritual horizon. They are so limited by the common traditional acceptances, by "as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be" so far as a system is concerned. That is something which has become static, fixed. Paul himself moved in a very rigid and fixed realm, the realm of "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not," which had almost countless points of application in the sphere of a very rigid system of religious life, which mainly held him down to this earth. Then he had the vision of the Lord, and in the day in which he received his God-given vision he was emancipated from this earth, emancipated from everything earth-binding even in a religious way. He was emancipated from all that which had so rigidly and firmly, and with such terrific power, bound him all his previous life. It is one of the miracles of the New Testament how a rabid Pharisee, such a deeply dyed Jew as was Saul of Tarsus, should be stripped of the whole of that tyranny and bondage of Judaism, and come right out into a clear place where he said such a thing as this: *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation."*

Think of a man like Saul of Tarsus saying that, with all the history behind him, the birth, the upbringing, and the training. It is not easy to get rid of a thing which is in your blood, and has been in your blood for countless generations. That was Judaism. All that tremendous vehemence of Saul of Tarsus as he was, more zealous than the rest; *"I advanced... beyond many of mine own age... being more exceedingly zealous..."* he said all that was in the man's blood. And then you find that man out of it, repudiating it and turning upon it, ready to fight it, with a new force and a new power to lay it low. What has done that? Vision! Not just a mystical vision, but something more than the psychical. It is the miracle of a revelation of Jesus Christ, and nothing other than that will do it. This kind of vision emancipates from all that is less than the Lord, even though it be of a religious order.

26 JAN - God Deals With Us on the Basis of Our Vision

When God does give vision it is that which becomes the occasion and basis of our testing, our education and our discipline. This is far more important to God than easy fulfilment and realization; than that kind of facilitation which is made possible by God's overruling. Look at the prophets! They were men of vision. They stood in the gap between threatening disaster and the survival of God's people. But what discipline they endured because of their vision!

It was their vision which brought all the inward as well as the outward suffering upon them. Look again at Habakkuk. How he cried to God about the situation and then took his position in relation to the vision. It is faith and patience which are the virtues to be perfected, so he realized that *"the just shall live by faith"* (Habakkuk 2:4). Similarly John, the man of the Patmos visions, described himself as the brother *"in... the patience of Jesus"* (Revelation 1:9).

So we may find that although things may be taking a new and different shape, the purpose of God has not changed. We may be presented with His vision in new and more advanced aspects, but it is only what God originally purposed. Can we adjust? Can we leave the things that are behind? Without raising questions as to the right or wrong of what has been in the past, can we go on and grow up as we move towards God's end?

We thank God that ever He took Paul away from his ministry of travelling evangelism and let him be shut up in prison, for it was then that the full glorious vision and revelation of the "heavenlies" and the "eternal" was given. This seemed to eclipse all the earthly and temporal. It was worth it. What might have seemed a tragedy was not one after all. Satan may have had a lot to do with Paul's imprisonment and with John's banishment to Patmos, but from these troubles the Church has gained very much in heavenly values. The Holy Spirit is the custodian of the full purpose of God and under His government the Church and the individual believer will move ever on and up.

27 JAN - We Cannot Cling to the Past Vision

It is very important to remember that God-given vision is never given in completeness at any one time. This is something borne out by an abundance of Scriptural evidence and instances. Such vision is always subject to enlargement. It will always be developed and fulfilled through new phases. This is a law in nature, and nature embodies spiritual principles.

The means employed by God at one time may and very likely will pass or be changed. In the sovereign order of God one particular phase, method or means will pass out, though greatly used and blessed so far. This does not involve a change of vision (unless it is ours and not God's) but an enlargement of vision. With God all that He uses and blesses, however wonderfully, is only relative and not final or ultimate. Therefore we must not cling to what has been, and regard that as the form for all time. So often this has been a most disastrous attitude of mind, and has resulted in God having to go on with His full purpose in other directions and by other means, and leave that fixed thing behind to serve a much lesser purpose than He wanted with it. Eventually it has spiritually died, although perhaps carried on by human effort and organization. It just lives on its past and tradition.

It is not only something more that is demanded, but something different. This is a crisis, and it will only be safely passed if there is vision of God's ultimate object. This demands spiritual-mindedness, capacity for grasping heavenly things. Our world may be tumbling to pieces, but the full and final outcome is what matters. The great pity is that so many just cling to the old framework or partial vision. God presents His heavenly pattern in greater fullness and demands adjustment. He does this with foreknowledge, knowing of a day which is imminent when this vision alone will save. But because it seems revolutionary or unlike what God has blessed in the past, it is rejected and put aside. Then the foreseen day comes and all sorts of expedients have to be resorted to in an attempt to preserve any values for God.

28 JAN - The Vision is Always Enlarged Upwards

Abraham had a vision of *"the city which hath foundations"* and he looked for it, but he never found it on earth. He found it at last in heaven, but only as the climax of a walk which was ever upward. Ezekiel was another man of vision. In his "visions of God" he saw the glory lifting from the earthly scene and moving up and on, finally culminating in a spiritual house and river which find their counterpart in the final revelation given to John. It was heavenly, spiritual, universal. What a significant phrase that is about the house seen by Ezekiel *"there was an enlargement upward"* (Ezekiel 41:7). God-given vision is always heavenly and always moves away from the merely temporal and earthly. To understand this is to be found in ways of vital fruitfulness.

God never works for reduction or limitation, even though at times He may seem to be doing so. When we are able to see as He sees we find that what looks like trimming and reduction is really His way of leading to more spiritual and heavenly enlargement. It was *"the God of glory"* who appeared to Abraham (Acts 7:2). It was *"the pattern in the heavenlies"* that was shown to Moses (Hebrews 8:5). It was *"... above the firmament... a throne... and upon the throne... a man above upon it"* that Ezekiel saw (Ezekiel 1:26). It was that *"the heavens do rule"* that Daniel apprehended (Daniel 4:26). These are not only sovereign factors in government, but heavenly conceptions in the nature of things.

What could have been voluntary with a minimum of loss has often had to be made compulsory with gains that are less than they could have been. This is because we do not from time to time stand back and in detachment wait upon God so that He can adjust and enlarge our vision. Many a work which has mightily served the Lord and been a great spiritual testimony has lost much of its glory and impact by becoming an organized routine which has made no provision for the further light from God which could have come from periods of retreat and waiting upon Him. Without renewed vision there can so easily be a leakage of spiritual power.

29 JAN - God's Inclusive and Supreme Object

Christianity has many aspects and Christian people are occupied with those various aspects such as evangelism, teaching, building up of believers, or contending for the faith. There are movements entirely devoted to the study of prophetic matters related to the coming again of Christ, and so on. All these are right. But they can, and often do, become things in themselves and, while being so good and right, have the effect of dividing Christians into sections, circling round some interpretation or some teaching or some specific object. The inclusive and supreme object of God, in and through and over all, is thereby very often lost sight of.

What is God's inclusive object and purpose? It is to build His house. God does not commit Himself wholly or exclusively to any one part of His purpose; He only commits Himself wholly to the all of His intention. God commits Himself wholly to one thing only — the building of His house.

The inclusive object of God is inherent in the few simple words from the sixth chapter of the book of Ezra: "*Let the house be builded*" (Ezra 6:3). That is God's all-inclusive object.

Ezra traced this decree back through and beyond the instrument, the ruler (Cyrus) who made it. He traced it back to God. He recognized that this decree, while made by an earthly ruler, originated with God (v. 22). Ezra said: '*God put it into the heart of the king.*' (Ezra 7:27) This came from God. And, having shown that it originated with God, he shows how God, in sovereign ways, committed Himself to it. God instigated this; God supported this; and, in spite of numerous and great difficulties, God consummated this.

30 JAN - God Seeks a Dwelling Place (1)

What is that which is so near to the heart of God, with which all His interests are bound up? It is God present amongst men: God related to an organism as the Inhabitant, the Occupier, the Indweller of that organism. The simple, plain meaning of a 'house' is, surely, something to be dwelt in, to be lived in; it has no meaning unless it is inhabited. God's thought is to be there, present, indwelling with the object of making Himself known and understood, and with the object of having blessed fellowship with that which comprises the 'house'.

The Bible contains the history of that thought, that eternal and Divine concept through the ages. It begins with a very simple, primal expression of the thought: the man and the woman in the garden, and God present, walking in the garden, talking, communing, making His thoughts and intentions known. It is a picture of happy fellowship between God and man, man and God. Man is shown in relationship with God, in terms of friendship (if I may use that word), and on a basis of commission to be God's regent here for the development and fulfillment of His purposes. Everything speaks of peace and order and beauty, and all that the human heart longs for. God has created for Himself a 'house', and is in it, and is walking in it, and talking in it. It is there in this simple first representation.

From that point, the Divine intention has a long and chequered history. Remember that all the actions of God are related to that one 'thing', and all the reactions in history, recorded in the Bible, are against that thing to drive God out, to exclude God, to bring about conditions in which God cannot be present, to which He cannot commit Himself. It focuses upon this one eternal desire of the heart of God.

You notice how much importance the apostle Paul attaches to this. "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." And that is not completed even at that point, for he afterwards follows on by saying as something still lying ahead — I press on that I may know Him! He is a man who has a vast knowledge of the Lord but who is so aware of the tremendous importance and value of spiritual knowledge as to put all other things which are of account to men aside as worthless for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

31 JAN - God Seeks A Dwelling Place (2)

There is this great prospect presented and opened out in Ephesians 4. The ascended Lord gave gifts among men; He gave ministering gifts, apostles, prophets, and so on, for the perfecting, the building up of the body of Christ *"till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God"*. It almost seems as though what is implied is this: that the goal of this body of Christ of which he is speaking, the Church which is His Body, is the full knowledge of the Son of God. Everything must be linked with that full knowledge of the Son of God.

Now, of course we understand this in a little way from our own spiritual experience and history. Every one of us who has any real spiritual life and history knows quite well that we owe our spiritual growth to spiritual knowledge that has come to us. We say: when I came to know (whatever it might be), when I came to know in a spiritual way, in a vital way, when I came to know that, it made all the difference. From the time I came to know in that way there has been a difference; I have been different, it has meant a great deal to me that I came to know! All the differences are made along that line of progressive, growing knowledge, spiritual knowledge, inward knowledge.

So the Word would reveal to us this: that all that God has intended in Christ for the saints, the great destiny, the great vocation, the great attainment — and what a calling it is, what an on-high calling, as Paul calls it — all that is to be reached by spiritual knowledge, by a progressively and continually coming to fresh inward knowledge. We can say: I know, I have come to know, and I am coming to know, and the Lord is leading me to know! It is like that, that is the way of it. That is simple, but I simply wanted at the outset to emphasize and remind you of the great value and importance that is bound up with spiritual knowledge.

FEBRUARY

FEB 1 - The Place of our Spiritual Knowledge

There is a place necessary in order to have true spiritual knowledge. For instance, the light of the purpose of God was only disclosed to Abraham when he came into the land, not when he was in Mesopotamia. God told him to get out of Mesopotamia, and it was not until he came into the land that God disclosed to him His purpose. It was necessary to be in a certain place before he got the knowledge.

The light of God and of the name of God was not disclosed to Jacob when he was in Paran (Gen. 21:21), not when he was in the foreign country, but when he was there on the spot at Bethel. He did not get the light of God, of the Name of God, until he had got to that place.

The light as to the Divine dwelling in the tabernacle was never given to Israel in Egypt but waited until they got to the place where the tabernacle was to be in the wilderness.

A place was necessary in order to have the knowledge and the Old Testament is just full of that. You know that place names in the Old Testament are always typical. You know how much is bound up with Gilgal. You have to come to Gilgal in order to have a certain kind of spiritual knowledge — Bethel, Hebron — and so you go on, and the Lord fixed places in the Old Testament for the revelation of Himself. *"Where I put My name"* (Ex. 20:24), if you come there you will know Me. You will not know Me out there somewhere else; you have to come to the place I have appointed, there I will meet you! That is the type.

In the New Testament, in the spiritual side of this, of course it is not geographical places; it is not a certain local gathering. It is not geographical spots or places, but it is a spiritual place that you have to come to before you get the knowledge. Well now, that opens a wide, large field, but in a nutshell, the place of spiritual knowledge has to do with our coming to the full knowledge of the Son of God, to the full-grown man.

2 FEB - The Only Way to Know Him is to be Buried

"The only place for a dead person is the grave!" Well, that is very blunt but this is the Lord's thought. Christ is the inheritance, Christ is the land, all the fullness represented by Canaan is in Christ, all the wealth, the land flowing with milk and honey. And the Lord's people cannot come in and possess and enlarge their inheritance in Christ, the full knowledge of Christ, if there is anything dead that is not buried. The Lord says that we are dead, we were crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6), and the New Testament principle is this: that it has got to be put out of the way, out of sight, before we can come into fullness, full possession and enlargement. It is simply emphasizing this law of the Word of God throughout that in order to know resurrection knowledge, we must come to the place of death and burial, that is, the putting away firstly of the whole body of the flesh and then of the whole natural man. It is only as you and I in the natural life are buried, are put out of sight, out of the way, that we can know Him. We are standing in our own light when we are not buried, when we are not out of the way; when we have not come to the place of death we are obstructing the light of the full knowledge of Christ.

You know how true it is, when the natural man is in evidence, the spiritual man is in eclipse. When the natural mind is active upon the things of God, the Holy Spirit does not show us the things of God. That natural mind has got to get out of the way to know resurrection, which is not just a thing once and for all, but a thing in which much more obtains for us which is to be known. Paul says, "*...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection*" (Phil. 3:10). Paul had been on the road a long time when he said that. "*Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us...*" (the power of His resurrection). That depends entirely upon the working of death, our coming to the place of death. The law is this: that the more we come to the place of death to the natural life, the self-life, the more we come to the place of knowing the full knowledge of the Son of God in terms of resurrection.

3 FEB - The Key to Fullness in the Son Lies in the Body

To come to full-growth and to the full knowledge of the Son, we have got to come to the place where the body (of Christ) is a reality, not just a doctrine or a truth. So often when we speak about this matter of the Body of Christ — the Church, the Body of Christ — the rejoinder from many is: of course! We take it for granted, all believers are one Body, they are all members of Christ and we are all one Body! Yes, that is the fact, the truth; but what about the practical working of it in a spiritual way? That is something different and something more. It is a strange thing the people who hold that can still without any question go on in schisms and divisions and all kinds of distinctions here on this earth among Christians. They can be cut up into a thousand denominators and this truth of the Body is not a working thing which simply rules out all that, refuses all ground of schism, division, and every kind of human department amongst Christians. It does not effect that with so many.

Well, you say, does it matter? Look at the Church, look at the Lord's children today. What about the full knowledge of the Son of God? What about this growth to the fullness of Christ? Oh, there is an appalling and tragic ignorance among the majority of the Lord's people of the Lord Himself. The ignorance is awful and the result is that the spiritual power is very small indeed. It does matter to our coming to the full knowledge of the Son of God; it does matter to our growth up into Him, to the attaining of the fullness of Christ, the full stature of Christ. It does matter whether the truth of the Body is a practical thing, not just theoretical. You have got to come to the place where you forsake all ground that is other than the ground of the absolute and working spiritual oneness of the Lord's people. To occupy such ground means limitation and loss, as the history of the church proves, and as all the activity of the enemy demonstrates. To divide the Lord's people is to weaken and limit them. To bring the Lord's people in spiritual oneness is to build them up and make them a force with which the enemy has to reckon.

The Lord says, I am in My Body, I will meet you in My Body! That is a spiritual law.

4 FEB - The Malady of Spiritual Blindness

As we contemplate the state of things in the world to-day, we are very deeply impressed and oppressed with the prevailing malady of spiritual blindness. It is the root malady of the time. We should not be far wrong if we said that most, if not all, of the troubles from which the world is suffering are traceable to that root, namely, blindness. The masses are blind; there is no doubt about that. In a day which is supposed to be a day of unequalled enlightenment, the masses are blind. The leaders are blind, blind leaders of the blind. But in a very large measure, the same is true of the Lord's people. Speaking quite generally, Christians are to-day very blind.

Spiritual sight is always a miracle. That fact carries with it the whole significance of the coming into this world of God's Son. The very justification of the coming into this world of the Lord Jesus Christ is found in the Word of God; because it is a settled matter with God Himself that man now is born blind. "*I am come a light into the world*" (John 12:46); "*I am the light of the world*" (John 9:5): and that statement, as you know was made right there in that section of John's Gospel where the Lord Jesus is dealing with blindness. "*When I am in the world, I am the light of the world*", and He illustrates that by dealing with the man born blind.

So spiritual sight is a miracle from heaven every time, and that means that the one who really sees spiritually has a miracle right at the foundation of his life. His whole spiritual life springs out of a miracle, and it is the miracle of having sight given to eyes which never have seen. That is just where the spiritual life begins, just where the Christian life has its commencement: it is in seeing.

Every bit of new seeing is a work from heaven. It is not something done fully once for all. It is possible for us to go on seeing and seeing, and yet more fully seeing, but with every fresh fragment of truth, this work, which is not in our power to do, has to be done. Spiritual life is not only a miracle in its inception; it is a continuous miracle in this matter right on to the last. All the way along it is from heaven. And who would have it otherwise, for is not this the thing which gives to a true spiritual life its real value, that there should forever remain in it the miraculous element?

5 FEB - The Great Need to See

What is the need of the hour, the need which, of course, is the need of every hour, of every day, of every age? We are made more and more aware in our time of this need, and in a sense, we can say there never was a time when there was a greater need for people who could say and can say, I see! That is the need just now. Great and terrible is that need, and not until that need is met will there be any hope. Hope hangs upon this, that there would arise people in this world, this dark world of confusion and chaos and tragedy and contradiction, people who are able to say, I see! If there should arise a man to-day who had position, to exercise influence and be taken account of, and such a man who saw, what new hope would arise with him, what a new prospect! That is the need. Whether that need will be met in a public, national, international way or not, I do not know, but that need must be met in a spiritual way by people on this earth who are in that position, who really can say, I see!

You see, Christianity has so largely become a tradition. The truth has been resolved into truths and put into a Blue-Book, the Blue-Book of Evangelical Doctrine, a set and fenced up thing. These are the evangelical doctrines; they set the bounds of evangelical Christianity in preaching and in teaching. Yes, they are presented in many and various forms. They are served up with interesting and attractive anecdotes and illustrations, and with studied originality and uniqueness, so that the old truths will not be too obvious, but will stand some chance of getting over because of the clothes in which they are dressed up; and a very great deal depends upon the ability and the personality of the preacher or the teacher. People say, I like his style, I like his manner, I like his way of saying things! And much depends upon that: but when all those trappings have been stripped off, the stories, the anecdotes, the illustrations, and the personality and the ability of the preacher or teacher; when that has all gone, you have simply got again the same old things!

What I am trying to get at is this: it is not new truths, it is not the changing of the truth, but it is that there shall be those who, in presenting the truth, can be recognized by those who listen as men who have seen; and that makes all the difference.

6 FEB - God Brings the Cross against Man's Wisdom

When anything becomes governed by human wisdom, by the mind of men, when it is brought into bondage of the 'scribes', the Lord has always brought in the Cross against that. In Israel, the Cross has been introduced over against that situation where the scribes and the rulers of Israel gave to Divine things their own human interpretation, imposed upon the things of God their own mind; created this great and intolerable burden to which Christ referred simply as the mind of man imposed upon Divine things. And it always means bondage. The Lord is not going to allow that. And so He reacts again, and there comes an impasse. And what is the nature of this new crisis? Absolute bewilderment; a situation where you do not know what to do, where to look, in what direction to move; how the situation can be resolved. It is altogether beyond human wisdom. It is an impasse of confounding, confusion, and despair. What can we do? What shall we do? How is this situation to be met? There is defeat at every effort.

The Lord has got to rescue us out into the realm of Divine revelation from any merely human or mental holding of Divine things. It is a tremendous thing that the Lord must have this realm where He is perfectly free, if He wants to, to give new light that may seem to upset all our interpretations — all the mental power of the scribes and the Pharisees, to upset the whole thing.

That is what we find in the Book of Acts. Here is Peter, a representative of Israel; here is Paul, one of those interpreters of the law, who held everything within the limit of their own minds, and said, Our word is final! Our interpretation is the authority! You have to bow to it! What is the Lord doing with men like Peter and Paul, and others in that book? He is bringing them up against situations where, if God does not now come in with some new light and some new revelation, they are at a standstill. He was taking them altogether beyond their best traditions, their strongest convictions, and their settled interpretations, and was making them see more than they, with all their learning and knowledge, had realized it meant.

7 FEB - The Cross Comes Against Any Changed State

There is one thing against which the Cross always stands: namely, a state that is other than that which God intended. The Cross stands over the nature of things when that nature has become different. Whenever the nature of things has changed from what God either made it at the beginning, or intended it to be, God has brought in the Cross in some way or another; at once He has introduced the Cross. The nature of man was changed at the beginning; he became something different in nature from what God intended. We all know that by our inheritance. And immediately the Lord introduced the Cross in the law of travail, of passion, of adversity; He wrote immediately over that state, *Despair* and *Death*. The Cross stood over against that changed state. The only hope for recovering the divinely intended state, condition, nature of things, lay in the Cross.

The Cross is the great purifying agent; and purifying simply means getting rid of mixture. When there are things which do not correspond or tally, they are of two natures, two realms, two opposing elements; when there is impurity, adulteration, the Cross stands four-square against it in order to purify. The very first thing with God whether in the individual, or in any company of His people locally, or in the Church universal is its purity, its cleanness, its separation from all iniquity and all mixture. Our Christian life is based upon the Cross, individually, locally, and universally. The Cross sees God's mighty, terrible, eternal declaration against impurity, the contamination and corruption that has come in to make a state, in man and in the world, which He never intended to be.

If, therefore, the Lord sees any state that He never intended to be, that contradicts His mind in this matter. He will bring in the Cross as a working power; and, where that is found, there will begin to arise a situation.

8 FEB - The Cross Comes Against the Reduction of Divine Things

When things have become less than God intended they should be, God brings in the Cross. And the history of Christianity is the history of that tendency to reduce both God and God's things to his own human measure; bringing everything of God, and God Himself, within the compass of man; man reducing God to himself in measure; making God less than He is, and the things of God less than they really are. We can see how that has gone on and is all the time going on, as a trend, as a tendency, as some working. And we are always near that peril of things becoming less than God meant them to be. God intended something very great; and here is loss, or the peril of loss, reduction; things becoming smaller, losing something.

There is a large lesson for us to learn, and ever bear in mind, that, with all that God gave to Israel, and all that God is willing to lavish upon us, it is not for ourselves, it is not to end in ourselves. Nor is it to be allowed to make us just something in ourselves, that 'We are the people'. It is a trust — a trust for all men. The apostle Paul recognized that; and what a tremendous thing his recognition of it meant in his own case, when you think of him as a typical Israelite. His vision and ministry embraced 'all men': "*that we may present every man*" — not, every Jew! — but "*every man perfect in Christ*" (Col. 1:28). He is the man who brings in the immensity of things, is he not? ... the immensity of Christ; the immensity of the Church. If there is one thing about the Church that is so evident in the New Testament, it is its greatness. How great it is! It takes its character and its dimensions from the Lord Jesus. Any who have seen the greatness of Christ can never tolerate a 'little' church, a 'little' fellowship, a little exclusive thing that is an end in itself. It must have a universal vision and a universal heart. To get that, any tendency to become something less will be met by the Cross, and there will come in hopelessness, despair, arrest, a sense of no way through, and a great deal of inward suffering and trouble and perplexity.

9 FEB - People That Know Their God

It is a knowledge of God in His power as Sovereign, in His executive authority, in His supremacy that is necessary. But the knowledge goes deeper than that; it is not merely knowing God as Sovereign, it is knowing God in that way that releases that sovereignty and causes it to function through the people that so know Him. It is knowing God in a vital relationship and union and oneness which makes the exercise and execution of the power possible in this world through such as possess this knowledge. God is on the Throne, and He has all power and all the resources necessary for dealing with the world situation, but He has so chosen and ordained that the exercise and the demonstration of His fullness of power and might and glory should be through those who have been brought into a vital union with Him on the basis of a personal knowledge of Him in His fullness.

Let us remember that the knowledge of God is by revelation. We can never get any knowledge of God merely by reading, by listening, by attending meetings. If this knowledge is not given to you by the Holy Spirit's working it into your very being and making it a part of you in a personal revelation and an inward birth, then you may hear all the truth possible and it will prove ineffective. How many of you who know this thing as a theory, a teaching from A to Z, are *really the via media of that transcendent power of God for the working of it out?*

You may understand it all by mental apprehension, know the terms and the verses, and use them, but what about the dynamic of this thing? What does our personal presence in a situation mean? Does it mean that there is the going out of a power which cannot be accounted for on any human basis whatever, but which is a greater force than the forces that are represented by world organizations, world methods, world resources? It is a most important question. Is this thing alive, or have we merely got a little more mental apprehension of it through conferences? Do we know God in this thing by reason of a personal inward revelation on the subject? Paul makes a point of this. "*It pleased the Lord to reveal His Son in me*" "*By revelation, not from man.*" 'I went not up to Jerusalem to consult the Apostles, I went into Arabia, and this thing was wrought out in me.'

10 FEB - The Knowledge of God by Way of Pain

You get a thing revealed to you as truth, perhaps something about the Cross of Christ, or victory over Satan, and you think you know it, and you say, This is beautiful! And you begin to talk about it, and it is not very long before something happens and your circumstances are touched. All the time there is the question "Will that truth hold good?" Is it going to work? And when you have got down as far as you can go, the flesh elements and the self elements have been dealt with, and you grimly hold on to the Lord in this matter of victory. Then it comes out, you have tested it right to the very bottom of your being — that thing has become you — and then you can go to others in their grim conflict and their darkness, and say. "I know — I know this thing, and I know God is faithful, I know the victory." You have got a mighty emphasis on your knowledge, it is a thing about which you have no doubt, because you have gone down into the depths with it, and proved it down there, and by the very pain the thing has been proved. It is the people who know their God like that who count. There is a power which is greater than all the other powers of the universe, and that power is to be mediated through you, but only as you know God on the basis of a personal experience through pain and suffering.

Then this knowledge of God only comes by implicit and unreserved obedience. "*If any man willeth to do... he shall know,*" and you never advance in your personal knowledge of God beyond the point of your will. If there is something upon which the Holy Spirit ever so gently puts His finger, and you start debating in your consciousness, a quarrel as to whether it is right or wrong, beyond the point of your dealing with that thing, you do not develop one fraction of an inch in your knowledge of God. Your knowledge of God depends utterly and absolutely upon your obedience to every little bit of Divine revelation. You cannot know God beyond the point of your obedience to what you already know of Him. He will give you no further revelation of Himself beyond that point where you obey what you know.

11 FEB - What Is the Real Life of Christ?

The real life of Christ is not the life of the three and a half years in which He trod this earth, but it is the life which He has been living in all the world since Calvary. It is an open question whether the record of those three and a half years would have survived or would have taken the place in the history of the world which it has taken, were it not for the romance of His continued activities and triumphs world-wide since His crucifixion and resurrection.

It is this romance that has attracted so much attention to that brief span of His life and teaching on earth, and which has created the world's literature relative to "The days of His Flesh." The greatest truth about Him is that "He was dead but is alive again."

That life through death has controlled the world ever since and has made the world realize that, in spite of most determined efforts to destroy it, here is something which is indestructible. Great world systems, cults, and even empires have exhausted all their resources to blot out the Name and the continued vitality of Christ. But it is they which have perished; He still lives on victoriously.

We never receive the real life of Christ until we too have been to the Cross. The real divine life the life of Jesus Christ is only known by what it does in men and women in making them live on a plane which infinitely transcends the human level.

If we are going to manifest that life of Christ, and if that vital indestructible something is going to bear its powerful testimony in the world, if that divine life — that very life of God Himself — indestructible, victorious, is going to bear its mighty witness and make itself felt in the world in the members of His Body, it is only through their oneness with Him in death and resurrection.

12 FEB - The Power of Dying (1)

In spiritual education something like this happens: One day being in the spirit, something said, or something read, or by the voice of the Spirit within, you see some wonderful piece of truth and it breaks upon you with all the force of a new revelation. Something you knew in theory before now breaks upon you as a wonderful divine unveiling. You lay hold of it, perhaps go to prayer and thank the Lord for it and feel that you are possessed of a great treasure which is going to be of infinite value in your life. You do not want to lose it; it has brought you such joy. But after a time it goes! It seems to die and go from you entirely, all the power of it and the joy of it seems to depart, it has become a faded vision.

Unconsciously to yourself, it may be, your life begins to move out along strange lines, things in the nature of severe trial come upon you, a situation of great difficulty arises, and you feel that by sheer force of circumstances you are being carried to despair and to death.

At this point, the only thing that occupies your questioning mind, is that "truth" which had apparently passed away. In your extremity it grips you and you make one desperate appeal to it, whereupon it comes to life and proves its vitality in bringing you through, up, and out to victory. What really has happened?

You received a revelation of some vital phase of truth. Good! But that truth had to be wrought out in you so that it became you. It was only mentally apprehended before, and in order that it might become your very life you had to be led into such a place of death that only this truth could save you.

So it has become part of your spiritual life and after that you never lose it. It is truth you know, and have proved, and whenever you are led to speak of it to others, it immediately gets home, it is a living thing, alive from the dead in your experience. This is the only basis of effectual testimony. The grain of wheat in which you could not see the life, although you believed in its possibility, goes down to the grave; then the surrounding forces and elements of God's providence begin to work upon it. It is quickened, it germinates, and nothing after that can resist its upward climb.

13 FEB - Life through Death

We have to die as those in the Lord's service and not only as sinners. It is an awful experience when death lays hold of our service. When, as a worker, as a preacher, we go down to death and by sheer force of circumstances, adversity, fruitlessness, spiritual ineffectiveness, we throw up our hands in despair and say, "I am at an end, I have finished."

Here comes the test of ourselves and our service. How much was it a matter of popularity? Were we out to make a name for ourselves? Was it a matter of reputation? Did it matter whether people said nice things about our work, that is, did we feel pleased and flattered? Or did it matter if they said nasty things, criticized, distorted, or detracted, and we went home and had a bad time? How much were *we* in the business?

Before the test came, of course we should have said, "I have no such personal ambitions, it is not my interests I am seeking." But when we go down to death and the door of service seems to be closing upon us, then we are laid bare as to our motives, as to our feelings, as to whether we are more concerned for our name than His. From all this self-life we have to be emancipated before God can use us. We have to get to the place where it does not matter in the least what people think, or say, or do, so long as God is satisfied and we are in the way of His will.

This is the way of peace and this is the way of victory. But we have to go down to the realm of death; the "I" has to be slain. It is just in this measure in which that "I" has been crucified that Christ in the power of His resurrection can be revealed.

To one who asked George Muller the secret of his service, he said: "There was a day when I died, utterly died"; and, as he spoke, he bent lower and lower until he almost touched the floor "died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes and will — died to the world, its approval or censure, died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God."

14 FEB - The Power of Dying (2)

Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free.

The whole of Isaiah 53 is a wonderful exposition of this truth. Here is the suffering Servant of Jehovah. By His own consent He is taken into a many-sided captivity. He has emptied Himself to become obedient to the death of the Cross. He has surrendered His divine rights, and has made Himself of no reputation, but is allowing Himself to be the plaything of all evil forces, in order that going down under them on the human side, He might tear them asunder and rise in transcendent victory over them, far above all principalities and powers.

The Cross is a picture of captivity on the human side. *"He saved others, Himself He cannot save."* "Cannot" is the ruling word of the Adamic race, but the Cross is the instrument or means by which the complete emancipation is wrought by Christ for Himself as the representative and inclusive Person of the new race.

When the Cross has done its work there is liberation from all human limitations, and Christ breaks forth from the grave in a way which gives Him the mastery of the whole situation. Those who have been identified with Him in His death are raised by Him to a life on a supernatural level, and through them He achieves such things as were before utterly impossible. There is no human explanation of the accomplishments of Christ through the ages since Calvary. The human side has been totally inadequate. This is true intellectually, socially, physically, constitutionally in the case of by far the greater number of those who have been used in these transcendent achievements.

They have been the transmitters to the world of things which *"Eye saw not, ear heard not, things which entered not into the heart of man,"* but which God revealed to them by His Spirit. The work done, the range covered, and the undying nature of their services has been in every way utterly out of proportion to the human resources. Not only so, but everything that the devil could utilize, stir up, and rally to their undoing and defeat has only borne out the fact of the supernatural and limitless nature of the work.

15 FEB - The Power of Dying (3)

In Isaiah 53 we see the Redeeming Servant of God going into desolation. The whole picture is one of desolation. He is alone, despised and rejected; terrible aloneness, His Cross has cost Him everything. His own brethren do not believe in Him, His nearest disciples do not understand Him, and yet how did that wonderful chapter close? *"He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days; ...He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."* From that point of the losses of the Cross and its promise of "seed," we move on to the ultimate vindication. *"Behold a Lamb as it had been slain, in the midst of the Throne,"* and around Him *"great multitudes which no man could number, out of all nations, and tribes and peoples and tongues."* There is the gain which is the result of His travail.

The practical application is this: Very often it does seem that God requires a lot of us; that this Cross makes tremendous inroads, tremendous demands, and sometimes forces the demand to the point of pain, when we have to hand over to Him something very dear. We seem all the time to be giving, giving. It seems that the law of sacrifice is tremendously at work. But this is the road and the law by which, and by which alone, the infinite and transcendent gain can come.

There is the Devil spreading out before the Lord, *"all the Kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof,"* and saying, *"all these will I give Thee, if -"* and this is the subtle significance of it "if you will only keep off that Cross." Satan knew what the Cross was going to mean, namely, that he would lose the world kingdoms and that Christ would have them by that Cross. So in effect his words meant, "Keep off that Cross, and I will give you everything." But said the Master, in effect, I am going to the Cross and I can afford to reject your offer for the time being. So He went by the way that led to the Cross, rejecting the world, denying Himself, and there, according to His own words: *"The prince of this world was cast out",* and He gained more than the Devil could have given Him.

Are you prepared to let go in order to obtain? Let go the temporal for the eternal, the transient for the abiding, the earthly for the heavenly, the present glamour for the ultimate glory? This is the way to possess all things. Some of us have proved that the things that we were most loath to let go, but which at length we gladly yielded up, have come back to us with a greater fullness, or have been the way of an enrichment transcending anything we before knew.

16 FEB - The Secret of Power is Holiness

The secret of power is holiness. If our lives are powerless it may be due to this lack somewhere, somehow, of this utterness for God, this separation unto God, of some kind of compromise somehow, somewhere, with the prince of this world who's robbing us of our spiritual power and vitality on his own ground. The secret of power is holiness; whatever you forget, remember that!

The secret of a testimony that counts is a holy life. It is not our teaching, our truth, our practice, religious ordinances and so on, our forms; it is nothing of that. In the first place our real testimony is the testimony of a holy life. It counts far more than all our words; it really does. And remember, this being true, this is the secret of divine support. The Lord will commit Himself to His own ground: *holiness*. The Lord will stand by those who stand for Him in His nature. The Lord will look after such. And whatever we may have in this life, in this world, we may have a lot but mark you, if we haven't got the Lord with us at last, it's no gain. It's no gain, it's a terrible loss. Israel had the ordinances and the oracles and the tradition and all that; a mighty lot that they had, but at last they lost the kingdom. They lost the kingdom; it was no gain was it?

Well now, what are we concerned about? What are you concerned about, what am I concerned about? I can focus it all down to this one thing: I'm concerned about the Lord being with us and the Lord committing Himself to us and I'm concerned about a testimony in power, a life that counts for God, leaving a mark for God, being remembered for what was of God. This is the only justification of our having come this way at all. And as I see it, all that depends upon this utter separation unto God, gathered into this word: *holiness*. "*Ye are a holy nation*". May we answer to the description and to us will be the preciousness.

17 FEB - An Inward Knowledge of the Lord

There is an appalling state of things amongst the Lord's people today. So many of them have their life almost entirely in that which is external to themselves — in their counsel and guidance, their sustenance and support, their knowledge, and their means of grace. Personal, inward and spiritual intelligence is a very rare thing. No wonder that the enemy has such a successful line in delusions, counterfeits, and false representations! Our greatest safeguard against such will be a deep knowledge of the Lord through discipline.

Immediately it is things for which we reach out; e.g. experiences, sensations, "proofs", manifestations, and so on, and we become exposed in a perilous realm where Satan can give a false conversion, a false 'baptism of the Spirit', a false evidence and guidance such as is found in spiritism. Then, with the withdrawing of those, he immediately suggests the unpardonable sin. If this suggestion be accepted, the value of the Scriptures and of the Blood is annulled, and the assurance of those involved is lost, and it may, after all, be all a lie.

To know the Lord in a real way means steadfastness when others are being carried away — steadfastness through times of fiery trial. Those who know the Lord do not put forth their own hand and try to bring things about. Such are full of love and patience, and do not lose their poise when everything seems to be going to pieces. Confidence is an essential and inevitable fruit of this knowledge, and in those who know Him, there is a quiet restful strength which speaks of a great depth of life.

Every fresh uprising of an abnormal condition has disclosed the appalling weakness amongst Christian people because of this lack. Waves of error; the swing of the pendulum to some fresh popular acceptance; a great war with its horrors and many-sided tests of faith; all these have swept away multitudes and left them in spiritual ruin.

These things are ever near at hand, and we have written this message to urge upon the Lord's people to have very definite dealings with Him that He will take every measure with them in order that they might know Him.

18 FEB - The Separation of Two Kingdoms

The very beginning of the Christian life rests upon this one historic law of God right through the ages which He cannot overlook. The beginning of the Christian life is called being born anew, or more correctly, born from above. What does it mean? It means all that Isaac's birth and resurrection meant in figure; it means this, that by our very new birth we are translated out of the authority of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. By our very new birth, our conversion — call it what you will — the very beginning of the Christian life is an absolute separation of two kingdoms; a transference from one into another. One is an unholy realm into which we are born and to which we belong by nature. The other is a holy realm, "*You are a holy nation*", a nation separated from this world unto God. New birth means that, oh, that that was made clear to all right there at the beginning how utter this thing is.

The Lord Jesus left people in no doubt about this; a cleavage utter and absolute. Ah, He was taking all the risks necessary about this because the reality, the awful reality of this: you CANNOT — you cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven while you cling to this kingdom inimical to God in any way. The two things cannot go together. One is unholy. The other is holy. And by new birth we cross a line which is a very broad line, as broad as the Red Sea and as the Jordan, as broad as the cross of the Lord Jesus. New birth... it's a life of holiness that we have taken up or entered into; a life of holiness, separation unto God. Complete separation unto God. It's to be a walk in holiness. How much the New Testament has to say about this, a walk in holiness that is separate unto God in heart, in spirit, in life, from this world. And if we knew it, a very large degree of our education, our spiritual education and our discipline in the Christian life under the hand of the *Holy Spirit*, has to do with those things in us which are mixed up. We are trying to make the best of two worlds, trying to keep together in compromise things which do not belong before God and which are going to spell disaster for us as truly as they ever spelt disaster for Israel. We are going to lose the kingdom. It is a tremendous thing!

19 FEB - The Three Essentials of the Christian Life

There are three things which are essential to an adequate life with God, to a fullness of the Christian life. Firstly, the realization that God is concerned with the accomplishment of something worthy of Himself. We shall not get very far toward a full Christian life, or a life with God, until it breaks upon us and takes hold of us that God is really concerned with the accomplishment of something worthy of Himself.

The second thing is that people shall become aware of what that great something in the heart of God is, what it is that God is so concerned with, and then that they shall be moved to co-operate with Him in it. That is an essential to a life of fullness with God, that we His people shall come to see what it is that He is really set upon, what it is that will really be worthy of Himself, and, more than that, that we shall become so deeply moved about this matter as to co-operate with Him in it.

And then, in the third place, that we recognize that this object in the heart of God and this co-operation with Him by His people involves very real conflict and cost, and that His people must face that and be ready to accept it.

These three things comprise the elements and features of a full life with God, and not one of them can be lacking. The very conflict and cost will themselves be the evidences of the value of the thing into which the people of God have been brought, and the thing which is so dear to God's heart. Where there is no conflict and no cost, there may be reason to feel that the outcome is not worthwhile. I think that the view of the Apostles, at any rate, was that the conflict was the complement of the calling so great and so high.

20 FEB - The Distinctiveness of God's Purpose

The Hebrews were a distinct race separated and hedged around for a distinct purpose. The time came in the days of the Prophets when they removed or destroyed their 'hedges', their spiritual boundaries, and the line of demarcation was obliterated so that all kinds of wild things grew around the 'choice vine'. This gave rise to the denunciations and warnings of the Prophets. The whole work of the Hebrew Prophets related to this one thing.

Each prophet had some distinctive feature of God's holiness for which he was fighting and suffering. The four called 'Major' represented four major characteristics of God. The twelve called 'Minor' (only because of the smaller size of the books bearing their names) had each some particular feature of the testimony of God. Mixture is an abomination to God. The Prophets were a challenge and a call to recover distinctiveness of testimony through distinctiveness of life.

In the New Testament, Christians were known as the *People of the Way*. This was a distinguishing designation. Distinctiveness of testimony is not some testimony distinct from the whole purpose of God. Nor is it a special part of that whole. It only arises when the general state has lost its true character, its characteristic distinctiveness. It is not a system of teaching, a form of practice and procedure, an exclusiveness of fellowship. It is the life and lordship of the Spirit; it is the pure and powerful river of God vitalizing everything.

The whole battle rages around this distinctiveness of life and testimony. The Old Testament and the New are alike in this particular battle. The wall of Jerusalem was a symbolic representation of the Divine line of demarcation. Hence the sieges and battles. Hence the deeper spiritual meaning of 'Nehemiah'. The first three chapters of the book of 'Revelation' are a return movement of the Lord on this line in relation to New Testament churches.

The feature of the Fall and the mark of Satanic interference with what is of God is loss of distinctiveness, purity, transparency. Hence, when Satan is finally cast down, as in the last chapters of the 'Revelation', "*that which maketh a lie*" has no place, and everything is "*clear as crystal*".

21 FEB - The Man Who is Spread Across the Bible

The Bible abounds with men. It abounds with many other things; with doctrine, with principles; but more than anything else it abounds with men. That is God's method, His chosen method, His primary method of making Himself known. These men who were in relationship with God, with whom God was associated, bring distinctive features into view. Not in any one man is the whole man acceptable, every feature to be praised, but in every man there are one or more features that stand out and distinguish him from all others, and abide as the conspicuous features of that man's life. Those outstanding distinctive features represent God's thought, the features which God Himself has taken pains to develop, for which God laid His hand upon such men, that throughout history they should be the expression of certain particular traits.

Thus we speak of Abraham's faith, of Moses' meekness. Every man is representative of some feature wrought into him, developed in him, and when you think of the man the feature is always uppermost in your mind. Our attention is drawn not to the man as a whole, but to that which marks him in particular. So by one Apostle we are called to recollect the faith of Abraham, while another will bid us remember the patience of Job. These features are God's thoughts, and when all the features of all the men are gathered up and combined, they represent Christ. It is as though God had scattered one Man over the generations, and in a multitude of men under His hand had shown some aspect, some feature, some facet of that one Man, and that one Man is able to say, "*Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of Me...*" (John 5:39).

There is a Man spread over the Bible, and all who have come under God's hand, have been apprehended for the purpose of showing something of His thought, which in its fullness is expressed in His Son, the Lord Jesus.

22 FEB - David's Hatred for the Uncrucified Flesh

David stands out as *the man after God's own heart*. It is that which is to be noted in the first public action of David in the valley of Elah. We refer, of course, to his contest with Goliath. This first public action of David was a representative and inclusive one, just as the conquest of Jericho was with Israel. God intended that what was true of Jericho should be true of every other conquest, that the basis should be one of sheer faith; victory through faith, possession through faith.

David's contest with Goliath was like that. It gathered up in a full way everything that David's life was to express. It was the comprehensive disclosure or unveiling of the heart of David. He was a man after God's own heart. In the case of David, the heart that God had seen is disclosed in the contest with Goliath, and it was that heart which made David the man after God's own heart all the rest of his life.

What is Goliath? Who is he? He is a gigantic figure behind whom all the Philistines hide. He is a comprehensive one, an inclusive one; in effect, the whole Philistine force; for when they saw that their champion was dead they fled. Typically what are the Philistines? They represent that which is very near to what is of God, always in close proximity, always seeking to impinge upon the things of God; to get a grip, to look into, to pry, to discover the secret things of God. They were ever seeking to pry into the secrets of God, but always in a natural way. They are called "uncircumcised." That is what David said about Goliath: "*this uncircumcised Philistine*." We know from Paul's interpretation that typically that means this uncrucified natural life, this natural life which is always seeking to get a grip on the things of God apart from the work of the Cross; which does not recognize the Cross; which sets the Cross aside, and thinks that it can proceed without the Cross into the things of God; which ignores the fact that there is no way into the things of the Spirit of God except through the Cross as an experienced thing, as a power breaking down the natural life and opening a way for the Spirit.

To be *a man after God's own heart* we must be those who have an utter hatred for the uncrucified natural life.

23 FEB - Misrepresentation - The Price of Loyalty

David had to suffer for his devotion to God. This man, who alone saw the significance of that with which he had to do, this man who alone had the thoughts of God in his heart, the conceptions of God, the feelings of God, the insight of God; this man who alone amongst all the people of Israel in that dark day of spiritual weakness and declension was on the side of God, seeing things in a true way, has to suffer for it. As he came upon the scene, and, with his perception and insight into what was at stake betraying itself in his indignation, his wrath, his zeal for the Lord, began to challenge this thing, his own brethren turned upon him. How? In the cruellest way for any such man, the way most calculated to take the heart out of any true servant of God. They imputed wrong motives. They said in effect: You are trying to make a way for yourself; trying to get recognition for yourself; trying to be conspicuous! You are prompted only by personal interests, personal ambitions! That is a cruel blow.

Every man who has come out against that which has usurped God's place in any way, and stood alone for God against the forces that prevail, has come under that lash. To Nehemiah it was said: You are trying to make a name for yourself, to get prophets to set you on high and proclaim through the country that there is a great man called Nehemiah in Jerusalem! Similar things were said to Paul. Misrepresentation is a part of the price. David's heart was as free from any such thing as any heart could be. He was set upon the Lord, the Lord's glory, the Lord's satisfaction, but even so, men will say: It is all for himself, his own name, his own reputation, his own position. That is more calculated to take the heart out of a man than a good deal of open opposition. If only they would come out and fight fairly and squarely in the open! But David did not succumb; the giant did! May the Lord give us a heart like David's, for that is a heart like His own.

We see in David a reflection of the Lord Jesus, Who was eaten up by zeal for the Lord's House, Who paid the price for His zeal, and Who was, in a sense above all others, *the Man after God's own heart*.

24 FEB - Daniel's Secret of the Shining Face

Daniel has learned the secret of the shining face, and there is something deeper here; more testing. Daniel is in Babylon. Babylon is in the ascendancy. Jerusalem is in ruins. We know what these things mean spiritually. We know that that which really is wholly according to God, that which was at the beginning, is not to be found today, that where the Holy Spirit absolutely governs and where it is all the Lord Jesus. You do not find that in the ascendancy today. It is the other religious system made by man that is in the ascendancy. That is Babylon. And the mass of the Lord's people are in captivity to it, a man-made Christian system.

And here is Daniel, seeing that which is according to God broken, ruined, and he sees this other thing, that is not according to God, holding sway and engulfing the mass of the Lord's people. He does not accept the things seen. He knows that Babylon is only a temporary thing and that God is going to have His testimony again. And God is going — through a remnant — to get His house again. He knows that God cannot be defeated and so he will not defile himself with the king's dainties. God is his life and he repudiates that which seems to have the upper hand for the time being and clings to God.

It is so easy to say, "Christianity is in a mess, but we must make the best of a bad job." But there is no joy along that line. God is working today secretly even in Babylon. And when we come to the book of Ezra, we find that God acts sovereignly. He stirs up the spirit of Cyrus and he makes a proclamation. That is God's outside action. But there is a company with whom God has secretly worked in Babylon.

And God is seen working in Babylon today with His own remnant and they are gradually moving in a detachment from this system so that when God's time comes, He will have that which is after His mind. But Daniel was the first one. He represented that company. He stood for what was of God although it might not be manifested at the moment. Do not accept anything less than what God has set His heart upon. Daniel's secret of the shining face was in that He looked on to God's sure end and believed that, in a dark day, the ultimate purpose and thought of God was certain of realization.

25 FEB - Stephen's Secret of Glory

Stephen — all that were in the council, looking upon him, saw his face as it were the face of an angel. What is the secret? I believe the second passage is the secret. *"And lifting up his eyes he said, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

Stephen was a man full of the Holy Ghost and faith, and the Holy Spirit had drawn Stephen's attention to the Lord Jesus in glory. Read Acts 7. It is almost matchless in New Testament literature; see the place that he gives to the Lord Jesus. He heads it right up to the Lord Jesus in glory and, while he is under the test, that is the thing that sustains him, and when he comes to the last moment he sees literally with his eyes what he had been seeing with his heart all the way through. And that just means this — when we see the Lord Jesus in glory — we have seen this, that God having got Him there, the Son of Man, having got one all-inclusive Man there, it is all right for us. He can get us there.

That One has simply fathomed all judgment, all death, all the power of Satan and the grave. He has exhausted all and God has got Him there. He had all the sin of all the creation from Adam onward heaped upon Him, and then that One came to glory. He had all the power and fury of the devil heaped upon Him, and God got that One to glory; the power of Death and Hades being liberated upon Him, and God brought that One to glory. We will never have to go through all that He went through. Stephen saw that one Man in the glory, being such a One as He was, is the guarantee that God could get him there; let all hell rush upon him. It is the secret of the shining face.

Sometimes we may, by reason of many things, wonder if we shall get to glory, if we shall hold out to the end, but, blessed be God, He is capable of getting us there. It is not our doing, it is the Lord's doing. Why? Because He has already got our forerunner in His presence. That bears you up in the time of opposition. And men filled with the Holy Spirit are especially the object of stones.

26 FEB - Seeing What God's Eye is Resting Upon

Moses had been up in the mount with the Lord and the Lord had spoken with him. Moses had come to see that upon which the eye of the Lord was resting. He had stood by the side of the Lord and he had looked with the Lord's eyes as the Lord brought before him His own vision, and that vision was expressed in the type, in the tabernacle. It all passed before the eye of Moses in the most minute detail. From the ark, out to the Holy Place to the Court and all its contents, and the priesthood and the sacrifices, and he saw what God's eye was resting upon. And by reason of the Lord's speaking to him about that, he became alive with the very glory of the Lord.

It is a wonderful thing to recognize that the Lord's glory became imparted to Moses by reason of that which became the common object of their eyes. What the Lord was looking at, Moses was looking at, and as they both looked at it together they shared the same glory. When does the Lord's own face light up with glory? When is the Father's face full of glory? When He looks upon the Lord Jesus. The tabernacle was only the Lord Jesus in a representation, it was a place where God can, without sacrificing His holiness, have fellowship with man and where man can, without being consumed by the very holiness of God, have fellowship with God. From the Lord Jesus Christ, the central-most reality of the mercy seat, God will speak with you face to face.

God has set forth Christ as a propitiation. God sees beyond the pattern to the reality, His Son, and it was Christ Who was in the eye of the Father in all His wonderful, mediatorial work to bring men nigh to God and God nigh to man. When that is in the eye of God, His face is full of glory, and when we get what is in His eye, we partake of the glory of the shining face of God.

Simply, it just means that when we are occupied with the Lord Jesus in all that He is from the Father to us and to the Father for us, when we are occupied with Him, then we know the shining face. Be occupied with anything else and you lose the shining face. Be occupied with yourself and your own spiritual life and condition, so that you are always self-analyzing, and it will not be long before you have lost the shining face.

27 FEB - The Cross in Its Rightful Place

When the Cross is in its place with its full measure, everything else will be in order, and everything else will be given its meaning, and its value. I feel that I cannot say this too strongly. We are so often concerned about the outside of things, about the order of the House of the Lord, about the ministry of the House of the Lord, about the people who are related to the House of the Lord. We are always beginning on the outside. We are trying to set up an order of the House of God. We are trying to put the people of the House right. We are very much concerned about the ministers, and the ministries. But if the Cross was really in its place with its full dimensions, all those things would see to themselves. The people would be right if the Cross was in its place. The ministries would be living if the Cross was in its place. The order of the House would be right if the Cross was in its place. It just does work that way. *if the cross is right at the center, in full measure, and note that it is a large altar, then everything else will come into its right place, and into a living relationship.*

I think we are right in concluding that this altar was of brass. The altar in the tabernacle was of brass, and the altar in Solomon's temple was of brass. Brass is the type of the righteous judgments of God. This great altar represents the fullness of the righteous judgments of God. This altar of brass is measured by the Man of brass, so that this altar represents God's thoughts in judgment.

In this altar of whole burnt offering, the one unrighteous man is completely removed. That altar of brass sees one man brought to ashes. The ashes were taken from this altar and emptied onto the ground at the side of the altar. That is a picture of God's Mind about the unrighteous man, or the natural man. He is consumed in the fire of God's judgment, he is reduced to ashes, and he is poured out on the ground. *That is God's mind about the natural man.* On the other side, it is only *the righteous man* that can stand here in the presence of this altar. Of course, those are the two sides of *the person and work of the Lord Jesus*. On the one side *He* was made sin for us, and in that capacity He was wholly consumed and brought to ashes. When He cried, "*My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me*", it was the cry of the ashes! He had been brought to ashes, and poured out on the ground.

28 FEB - The Heart Burden for the Lord's Testimony

On the whole, today the Lord's full thought and conception is not the general thing found among His people. The testimony of the Lord has largely broken down, and the great multitude called by His Name are governed and manipulated and controlled by something that is religiously of the earth and not of the heavens, of man and not of the Holy Spirit; and there needs to be seen the impossibility of accepting that state of things.

It is one thing to recognize that and quite another thing to be in relation with the Lord's movement to recover for Himself that which is according to His mind. One can be occupied all the time with the bad state of things, bemoan it, make people feel miserable, and yet never get anywhere. Ezra opens with the sovereign activity of God (chapter 1:1). God acts not only from the outside, not only sovereignly, but there is something that precedes it, that makes possible His activity, that brings in the sovereignty of God.

All these who represent His vessel for dealing with the situation were men who had a great burden about the situation, and they are no use to God in a situation like that unless in the burden of it.

We see Ezra latterly spreading himself out before God in such a way that the people gathered round to see him, and when they saw his desperate concern over the state of things, they were so tremendously moved that no sooner had he finished praying than they came to him and sought to have things put right. So we see Ezra away in Jerusalem with a great burden for the Lord's testimony.

Nehemiah, away in Babylon, is seen to have a similar burden. For, having asked Hanani and his friends as to their welfare in Jerusalem, and hearing from them a report that was not good, this so burdened him that his countenance became changed, and he, knowing his life was at stake, went before the king with a sad face — for it was criminal to go before the king with a sad countenance — yet he could not help himself for sorrow of heart over the Lord's interests and testimony, concerning the people called by His Name.

MARCH

1 MAR - Travailing For the Time in Which We Live

There is a romance of Christian work but that is mere glamour; all the enthusiasm and interest of organized Christian activity; but it is not what we are before men in this matter that counts, but what we are before God in the secret place, having heart concern for the Lord's testimony. Have you a burden, a passion? Is the breakdown in the Lord's testimony in the earth among those upon whom His Name is called a heartbreak to you? We shall never get anywhere till, in measure, His travail is entered into by us.

Ministry, in its real, abiding, eternal value, will depend upon the measure in which the travail is entered into by us. This is a day for travail, whether it be a travail for unsaved or for the Lord's people; every true spiritual activity is born out of travail, and those who have been most used of God in every time have been men and women who had this travail in their soul, in their secret life with God. Have you got it? Perhaps you say no. Then ask the Lord to bring you into His concern, stretch yourself out before God to be brought into His burden for the time in which you live.

And so all this represents those who carry on their hearts a burden which leads them to a point where their interests have become quite secondary, and they take their life in their hands, and hold everything in relation to the Lord's own interest and His testimony, willing to let all go for God. This becomes a heart burden to be carried all the time, not merely a ministry burden. Oh! that the Lord would put this burden within us, so that wherever we are we cannot be slack. This is necessary to any real ministry. Not that we are ever to give the impression of being unhappy. There was a confidence and faith which created in these servants of God the strange, the very true paradox "*Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*" (II Cor. 6:10).

Beloved, that will be one of the emancipating factors in any life. The way of deliverance from oneself and from introspection is to get a share in the Lord's burden. Deliverance from oneself comes along the line of being concerned for the Lord's interests. You can become tied up with your own spiritual problems, and the way out is to have the burden of all God's people on your heart.

2 MAR - Are You in God's Roll of Honour?

We find a number of names are mentioned in Ezra 8: the names of *"them that went up with me from Babylon."* Here you have a record of those who did absolutely separate themselves to go through with God; we have Holy Writ here, and it is as if the Holy Spirit is taking the pen and putting down the names of men who took responsibility in the testimony of God, and HE is setting down every name of the wholly devoted company who went right through with God; for the Holy Spirit would have made comment, if anyone had stopped on the way. No, these left the comparative ease and comforts of Babylon for a long and difficult journey, fraught with many dangers, and came back to a ruined city. There is hard work, a certain amount of suffering, opposition, and so on, but they are willing to pay the cost and go through; and these are the ones whose names are severally recorded with such care, and their names will stand as long as the Bible stands; they are *"Called, chosen, and faithful"* wholly for God, whatever the cost.

Are we going through with God? Or are we counting the cost and drawing out? And notice that the next thing in the chapter is Ezra's statement: *"I found none of the sons of Levi there"* (Ezra 8:15).

Why was this? The Levites were those who had an inheritance only in God; they had no inheritance in the land (Joshua 14:4-5). To go to a land of desolation in which, in any case, they had no inheritance, does not look very promising, and they were getting more in Babylon than they could get there, and so the Levites could not see how they were going to get their bread and butter, and they knew they had no right to enter into the land-realm of things; and because they had no inheritance in the land, but had to trust the Lord, they stayed in Babylon. Those who had to come out and have their portion only in God, without seeing where "on earth" it is coming from, were miserably few; no Levites came out! And is it not the same in the ministry of the Word, when you come out of a system where you are sure of your supply? It is a test of faith to have a secured position in the world of religion, and to come out and have your portion only in God, nothing in the world; and we find not many can stand up to that. So we find no Levite in that record of names.

3 MAR - Have You Been Diverted from What Counts for God?

If we are going to stand with God, for that which wholly represents His mind, we have to meet the most fierce antagonism, conflict, and pressure, from every quarter; there is going to be no method overlooked by the enemy for frustrating the end in view. Why so much antagonism? Why so much pressure? Each time when something is in view which is to count for God in relation to His End-time purpose, there it is, you meet it all the time.

Where does the Devil get his information from? He finds out when we have a message from God that is going to count, and we meet this pressure from within and without when we are in the thing that is counting for God. When it comes you must recognize that it is related to something which is to count for God. It will come through people, and if we blame the people and focus our attention on them, we have missed the point; if we begin to fight people whilst all the time it is something deeper. *"Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies"* (Eph. 6:12; A.R.V.).

People get cross with one another, and that gets on top of us, and we begin to direct our attention to them, and we get out with them and there is a distressing situation, and we see afterwards how foolish we are to allow the Devil to swing us off into a human track when it is a spiritual issue. It has not really been the fault of persons, or just inconsequential happenings; there has been a spiritual issue at stake, and all these other things were brought about and used by the enemy to occupy us with the lesser, and so blind us to the real issue, thus keeping us out of prayer, and preventing our standing with the Lord for His rights which were at some point or other being challenged.

It is the realm of unceasing conflict, and it would seem that we have come into that part of the age when the enemy takes no rest, and we find we can take no off-times. Anything you do must be done deliberately with God, and you must never act out of, or apart from, God; that exposed movement has been watched for by the enemy, and you have to pay for it.

4 MAR - Travailing in the Lord

Let us spend a little while in looking still more inwardly into this travail of Nehemiah's. What were the features of his travail? I have been trying to understand him, to read him, to get into his heart, to get behind his cry, behind his sorrow, his burden in his distress. As I have done so, it has seemed that these are some of the things which lay behind this travail of his.

Nehemiah saw how things ought to be, and how things really were; and then he saw his own position. There he was, away there in Shushan, the palace, cupbearer to the king. He was an exile, and he was virtually a slave, one who had been taken on as a servant in the palace. From the standpoint of that palace, and from the standpoint of Babylon, it may have been an honourable position; but from his own standpoint he was like a slave in the world: he was spending his time in the world, the business of this world, and his whole soul was groaning. 'Here am I in the business of this world, having to go to work every morning and finishing late at night, and this is repeated day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year and my soul cries out to be doing something about the purpose of God and the situation of the Lord's people'. This cry against his own position was a feature of his travail.

God is sovereign even in that. Perhaps that touches you who are reading these lines. You are going to work every morning and coming home every evening, and by far the greater amount of your time and strength is occupied with serving this world. You feel like a slave to this world, and you say, 'Oh, that I might be free to do something for God!' My dear friend, there is value in travail like that. There were many in Babylon who had settled down and accepted the situation, who were taking up business and earning wages, and were making this now their life. They saw nothing more than that, or other than that. But not so Nehemiah. His soul revolted against his position in the world. 'Oh, to be free to do something for God!' That travail meant something to God. That travail was the birth pangs of something for God.

5 MAR - According To His Own Purpose

It is most important that we should be alive to the fact that the Christian life is governed by purpose. The thought of 'purpose', indeed that very word itself, is much in view in the New Testament. Most of us are familiar with one statement relating thereto: "*To them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose*" (Rom. 8:28). Unfortunately it is usually cut in half and only part of the first half taken: "*all things work together for good*". We might go on: "*to them that love God*", but that is not the whole statement, which adds: "*to them that are the called according to his purpose*". Then we have another word, not so generally known: "*Foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will*" (Eph. 1:11). Again: "*according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Eph. 3:11). Yet once more: "*according to his own purpose and grace*" (2 Tim. 1:9). These are sufficient at least to indicate that 'purpose' is a governing idea in the Christian life: that we are not saved just to be saved, we do not become Christians just to be Christians. That is only the beginning of something; it is with a view to something very much more in the thought and intention of God.

There are many things said about the purpose of God in the Scriptures. Suffice it to say that the Divine purpose is all-inclusively set forth in a clause in one of Paul's letters: "*till we all attain... unto the... fullness of Christ*" (Eph. 4:13). You will instantly recognize that that makes Christ very great. Yes, and the Christian life must therefore be something very great if it takes its character, its meaning, and its dimensions from Christ. It must necessarily be something progressive. No Christian at any time in their experience or history here on this earth can ever say that they have reached that end. It means that the Christian life is one of progress and development. It is all moving toward that ultimate fullness. So we find in the New Testament that the Christian life is set forth in three distinct phases: we ARE Christians, we are BECOMING Christians, and we are GOING TO BE Christians. These three phases are indicated in the original language of the New Testament by three different tenses of the verb.

6 MAR - Attaining to the Fullness of Christ

What, then, is the fullness of Christ? It is simply the continuous enlargement and ultimate finality of these very things. The continuous growth of life, the freshness, the dynamic force of God within the life ...this motive, power, this Divine nature, which is in His life should never, never come to a standstill. It is intended, according to the eternal purpose, to grow and grow and grow more and more. More life! Let us take this earnestly to heart. To receive eternal life may be a gift once and for all, but if you are at the beginning you have yet to discover how wonderfully full that life is, and how that life can become more and more abundant as you go on. The longer we as Christians live, the more should we be characterized by this mighty life of Christ "*the power of his resurrection*" it is called. And the fullness of Christ is the progressive enlargement and development and sum of those very things which came to us, and into which we came at the beginning; and if we attain unto fullness, which we shall never do here in this life; but we shall ultimately move right into the fullness, it will be the universality of all those things.

Now you can see how vast Christ is, and how vast the Christian life must be. The Scripture speaks of Christ 'filling all things' "*that he might fill all things*" (Eph. 4:10). How is Christ going to 'fill all things'? It just means that, when that comes about, all things, and it is a vast, an infinite 'all' will be full of His life, full of His light, full of His liberty, full of His love, and there will be nothing else. All that Christ is will be expressed in the whole creation. That is the purpose of the Christian life, and we have failed of the purpose if that is not true, in a progressive way, now. If it is not true that those things are increasing in us, we have missed the very object of the Christian life. Yes, if there is not more love, and still more love, and yet again more love and life, and light, and liberty, the very purpose of the Christian life has been missed.

7 MAR - Religion Cannot Save Us

To become a Christian is not to become 'religious', or to adopt a new 'religion'.

Among non-Christian peoples, a turning to Christ is often referred to as 'accepting Christianity', and in what are called Christian countries conversion is frequently referred to as 'becoming religious'. Such expressions, with their associated ideas, are altogether inadequate and indeed fundamentally false. There was no more religious man on the earth, in his time, than Saul of Tarsus. Read what he says of himself in Acts 22 and 26, and Philippians 3. Here was a man who was just aflame with religious zeal and passion. No argument is necessary, with history before us, to prove how wide of the mark religion can be.

And that is true of 'Christianity', when it is merely a matter of religion. To be a true Christian is not to accept a creed or statement of doctrine, to observe certain rites and ordinances, attend certain services and functions, and conform more or less diligently to a prescribed manner of life. All this may be carried very far, with very many good works; but those concerned may still be outside the true New Testament category of 'Christian'.

Herein lies the danger of an assumed acceptance with God, which may bring that bitter disillusionment foretold by our Lord Himself in those startling words: "*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not... by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me*" (Matt. 7:23, 24).

No, religion is not Christianity, either more or less; it may be only a deception. So that when we seek that people should become Christians, we are not asking them to change their religion, nor are we asking them to become religious. Religion, as such, has never made this world happier or better.

8 MAR - No One Can 'Join' the Church

To become a Christian is not to join an institution called 'The Church'.

If the truth were known, there is no such thing as 'joining' the Christian Church. We never took any steps, either of word or deed, in order to get our limbs to become members of our bodies. There is no distinction between our members and our bodies — our members comprise our bodies; but they do so, not by organization, invitation, examination, interrogation or catechism, but simply by life. So, in the Church of Christ, provided that a true life-relationship exists, a 'membership' in the technical sense is a superfluity, and may be a menace. If there is not that relationship, then no 'membership' can constitute the Church of Christ.

There are multitudes, we fear, who have 'membership' in what is called the 'Church', who are not able to stand up to the test which will be presented when we come to speak of what a Christian is. But let us say here that when we appeal to people to become Christians we are not asking them to 'join the Church'. And it must be realized that Christianity is not just one more institution or society. You may go to many places called 'churches', and never really meet Christ, or find satisfaction.

Of course, that is negative. We must realize, however, that when we become Christians we share one new life in Christ with all other born-again believers, and thus we become *one in Christ*. That really is the Church. It is for us, then, to cherish that relationship and jealously watch over its sacredness. There are immense values in it.

9 MAR - Has God Moved Into You?

To become a Christian is not to become a part of a new movement.

It is true that there is a sense in which Christianity is a movement, a Divine movement from Heaven. But there are very many who conceive of Christianity in terms of a great enterprise for world betterment or even evangelization. The appeal is so often made that people will come and associate themselves with this great 'work'. There is that in most people which makes a response to such an appeal, and would like to be in a great movement. But such a way of approach is to court trouble, or at least to be found sooner or later in a false position. Moses got the 'movement' idea in Egypt and then had forty years' inaction in the desert.

There is that which comes before the 'movement', and the movement is with God, not with us. The greatest value in movement, when God's time comes for it, often is that we have learned not to move without Him.

We do not appeal to you to join a movement. We do not invite youth, saying, 'Here is something into which you can throw all your natural powers and youthful enthusiasm!' We would say: 'God has a purpose: you are of concern to Him in relation to that purpose. But you cannot even know or enter into that purpose until something has happened in you which has made you another person. In that purpose you will need much more than natural powers and youthful enthusiasm.'

10 MAR - "Who Art Thou?" — "I Am Jesus!"

The very first words of Paul when confronted by Christ were: "*Who art thou?*" To which the answer came clear and strong "*I am Jesus!*" It was a startling discovery, and Paul might well have exclaimed, 'What, Jesus alive?' Jesus had been put to death, crucified. All that remained to do was to blot out the memory of Him and destroy what represented Him. To this work Paul (then Saul) had committed himself. We can hardly imagine, then, what a startling and paralyzing thing it was to be confronted with the fact that Jesus was not dead, but alive, and in glory. And not only with the fact, but with the Person Himself.

All that this implied and involved has been the teaching of many centuries since. We begin our Christian life by an experience of this living reality. Not a Jesus of history, but a Jesus of heart experience. That He really is alive is the one thing which is open to be proved by us, and it is the most serious matter as to our eternal destiny. We have only to drop our traditions, our prejudices, our suspicions, our questions, our mental problems, and, quietly kneeling, speak to Him (although unseen) as we would speak to one whom we could see; telling Him out of the honesty of our heart what we would tell Him if we were face to face. The first step is definitely to speak to Him, as to a Person.

This is the way of a discovery. We learn from the New Testament that the Spirit of God is abroad in the world just to bring about this discovery to make real that Jesus lives to save and be our very life. This wonderful realization, that Jesus lives, comes to the heart of every one who honestly turns and puts it to the test; and everything springs out of that.

There is only one way, really, of knowing Jesus, and that is by coming to Him. It may seem very unreal and foolish to say something to someone of whose existence you have no inward proof; but might this not be the same in other circumstances?

11 MAR - What Wilt Thou Have Me Do, Lord?

This represents a new position and a new relationship with Christ. How very different from that of the old Saul! Hitherto his life and activity had been out from himself what he thought he would do, what he proposed, purposed, planned, determined, and desired. Self-determination had been his way of life, although he would have said that it was done in a good cause — even done for God. What an example Saul was of the fact that a man's very best intentions and devotions, in what he believes to be God's interests, may yet be doing God the greatest disservice and he himself be totally blind to the fact.

We see here, then, that one thing is a clear evidence of a life truly acceptable to God; it is the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ. Paul first used that word, "*Lord*", at his conversion; it came out spontaneously when he realized that Jesus lives! From that moment Jesus was his Lord, his Master. We know from his life afterward how utter was that surrender and change of government. Everything from that hour was on the basis of "*What wilt Thou?*"

Yes, it is the hall-mark of a true Christian life when, with the same inward realization and abandonment, we say to Jesus, "Lord", and thenceforth have our whole lives governed by Him as Master.

12 MAR - "Christ In You, The Hope of Glory"

There is one indispensable mark and feature of the Christian life to which we will point at this time. It is shown in the words addressed to Paul by one Ananias: "*The Lord Jesus... hath sent me that thou mayest... be filled with the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 9:17).

The consummation of this basic work, by which we become Christians in the true sense, is that everything which is true of Christ is made an inward thing with us. Up to this point, although everything has been very real and deep changes have taken place, it has been mainly as in an outward relationship with Christ. But it would have been fatal to have left it there, however great the discovery. We cannot live upon something which happened at a certain time. We cannot meet all the tremendous forces of evil which will oppose us, in the strength of a mere memory, however vivid. We shall never live triumphantly, or serve effectively, or satisfy God truly on any basis of what is merely outward and objective.

The fact is that only Christ can really satisfy God; only Christ can do God's will and God's work. Only Christ can overcome the spiritual forces of evil. Yes, only Christ can really live the Christian life. Hence, the one great inclusive and crowning reality of a Christian is Christ Himself WITHIN! Paul later put this in these words: "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (Col. 1:27).

This becomes true by a definite act when we believe. The Holy Spirit takes possession of us in an inward way. This indwelling of Christ had never been known by any man in history until Christ had died and risen and been glorified. It is therefore the peculiar wonder and glory of the Christian. It is this very thing that explains the New Testament term "*born anew*". There was nothing like it before.

13 MAR - Stepping Into the Heart of God

The last step into the heart of God is oneness with God in His passion, one with God in His suffering and in His joy. All the other aspects of oneness with Him meet at the Cross, and the deepest fellowship that can be had with Him is found in fellowship with His sufferings. When Abraham was obedient to the Lord's command: "*Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest*", he certainly did reach the point of absolute fellowship with God, who Himself gave His only begotten Son.

Abraham had been called upon to make many offerings in his life; many sacrifices had to be made from the day that he left his own country, but there was no sacrifice like this one, which touched him at the point where it cost him more than anything else. This was more than all the other sacrifices, and so, at last, he stepped right into the heart of God.

That Scripture makes it very clear to us, that we are called into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. This is not His sufferings which were atonement for sin; there is never any atonement about our sufferings. But leaving that aspect out, it is quite clear in the Word that we are called into the fellowship of His sufferings. The sufferings of Christ are a gift to His people. The Apostle Paul says: "*To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf*" (Philippians 1:29).

Jesus offers us the cup and says: 'Will you drink of My cup?' While it is the cup of remission of sins and we would grasp that with both hands He also says: 'This cup is fellowship in My sufferings', and too often our hand is very slow to take that cup.

Once as we gathered at the Lord's Table in India, there were two very fine young Indian men sitting in front of me. I explained what was the meaning of the cup and the loaf, and then everyone rose to receive them. These two young men rose, and hesitated for a moment; they were weighing this matter up and then one of them bowed his head and accepted it. The other shook his head, as much as to say 'No, I cannot.' One went out of that meeting with much joy in his face, and the other went out with his head bowed and no joy.

14 MAR - Filling Up That which is Lacking

Fellowship in the sufferings of Christ is something that is offered to us as a gift, and it is always fruitful. The sufferings of Christ are always fruitful sufferings. And we have a picture in the Word of God of how it will be in the end in Revelation 5:11; 7:9. Indeed, the sufferings of Christ are fruitful sufferings.

Although we may not always feel it to be so, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the way of fullness of blessing. Did you see what followed those words to Abraham about offering his only son? *"And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore"* (Genesis 22:15-17). Fellowship with Him in His sufferings is the way of fullness of blessing. There is always a second time with the Lord. The first time was: *"Take now thy son... and offer him"*, and the second time was: *"Because thou hast done this thing... in blessing I will bless thee."* The Lord commits Himself to those who commit themselves to Him. You can see that in verse 16 of this chapter, and here is one of the many 'I wills' of the Lord. How often the Lord says 'I will' to His people! It is usually some blessing, but here it is Himself. The Lord gives Himself to those who share His sufferings.

But this blessing is not just a personal thing for ourselves. See how extensive this blessing was! 'Abraham, however much you may be blessed, you will not just be one by yourself. Many, many others will come into blessing because you have shared My sufferings.' It must be like that, because God is like that. If we want to be a blessing to others we must accept fellowship with our Lord in His sufferings, and if we will accept it, we shall certainly be a blessing. The Word of the Lord is not *'I will bless thee'* only, but *'I will make thee a blessing.'* The Cross always cuts deeper channels in our lives, but God does not cut deeper just in order to leave it like that. It is in order that there may be more room for His fullness. It is a universal law in all creation that increase only comes by travail. God only knows how much it may cost us, but where there is cost there is preciousness, that which is precious to the Lord.

15 MAR - Bound To the Anointing of God

The anointing throughout both Old and New Testaments is shown to be both general and particular; comprehensive and specific. The first thing about the general aspect of the anointing is that, because it is the Spirit of God who is the anointing Spirit, the anointing is God joining and uniting, and committing Himself to whatever or whoever is anointed. It means that whenever and wherever the anointing rests, there God has to be reckoned with. To touch that is to touch God. To obtain a real knowledge of this truth and fact we have only to read those parts of the Book of Numbers which deal with the Levites, the Tabernacle and the vessels thereof. Life and death were bound up with all these as anointed because thereby God was bound up with them.

In the New Testament this comprehensive aspect is first related to Christ and then to the Church. The very word or name '*Christ*' means *Anointed*. "*Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed...*" (Acts 10:38) To Him God was committed. To touch Him was to touch God, as history has proved. In the end everyone is going to be judged and their destiny fixed according to their attitude and decision regarding Jesus Christ. What a tremendous amount of detail is comprehended by this inclusive truth! When we pass to the Church we find that, according to the New Testament, the Church is the Anointed Vessel.

On the Day of Pentecost a company of over five hundred men and women were constituted the Church of God by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. That company came under the anointed leadership of the exalted Lord Jesus, for INCLUSIVE anointing was always upon the head. From that time the Church carried into the world the implication of God, and rulers, empires, and peoples had to reckon with God in the Church. All that was true of Christ as the Anointed passed from Him as Head down to the Church, His Body. It was not what the people were, or are, in themselves, but because of the anointing, although anointed people are such because they do not stand on their own ground, but on the ground of Christ. It is taken for granted in the New Testament that truly born from above, baptized believers have the anointing, and surprise is expressed if the evidence is not present (see Acts 19:2-3, R.V.). Place alongside of this reference 2 Corinthians 1:21, etc. The very place of believers as "*in Christ*" places them under His anointing, or in Him, as the anointed One.

16 MAR - The Anointed Church

The anointing has always been within the Divine sovereignty, and NEVER in the choice, power, or hands of men. It is a very serious thing to either get or be put into a position for which God has not acted by the anointing.

When we come into the New Testament this law of the anointing is very clearly recognizable as to both Christ and the Church. The Holy Spirit is seen to be the custodian of the gifts, functions, appointments, and enduements in the churches. It is GOD'S order; to overlook, to ignore, to violate, to exceed this law is to mean an affront to the Holy Spirit. This will result in confusion, limitation, and divisions. The anointing is different from natural ability and qualification. The least gifted naturally is not thereby disqualified from Divine usefulness, and the most gifted or qualified naturally has no advantage here. The anointing is unique. Just put together 2 Corinthians 1:21 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-30, and all of 1 Corinthians 2.

In the Tabernacle of Israel there were great vessels under the anointing, and there were such humble instruments as the snuffers, but even the latter were anointed. Now, be careful! It was ANOINTED snuffers. There are plenty of people who take on themselves the function of snuffing. They will snuff ANYTHING, and snuff OUT anything. The snuffers of the Tabernacle were not for reducing or extinguishing the light of the testimony, but for keeping it fresh and from making an unpleasant atmosphere. It needs the anointing for such a ministry.

There is another thing that we must always remember, and it is that EVERY vessel, function, and place derives its value from its relatedness to all the others. Indeed, no one vessel however important has either meaning or anointing apart from all the others. The anointing is ONE, although in a variety of operations. The lamps demand the snuffers, and the snuffers are absurd without the lamps.

17 MAR - God's Mind about the Church

In the Divine scheme of things it is the Church which has the ultimate effect in the spiritual realm. I mean that individual Christians, though they may be born again, as individuals will not get very far in touching the outermost realm of spiritual forces. There a real registration has to be a corporate one. It will be the Church eventually which will be the instrument of Divine government in this universe.

Spirituality means what the Church is in God's mind. When we come to contemplate the Church in its wholeness and entirety, of course, we come mainly to the letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. There we find God's mind about the Church. We must realize the necessity for our seeing and apprehending what the Church is in God's mind, not as we find it in the churches, not as it actually is here; and we must stand on that ground, or we shall be helpless in this matter of spiritual impact. I mean that if we are going to accept what we find in the New Testament as to the churches as being the expression of all there is, we are very soon going to give up the fight and shall not get very far. If we are going to accept that as the standard, we are going to be crippled, and the measure of our spirituality will be very small indeed, and therefore the measure of our impact likewise. The Apostle, who was mainly responsible for these churches coming into being, repudiated their condition, would not accept it, was fighting against it. Why? Because he had seen God's mind; that was his position, his vantage ground, his strength. If he had never seen God's mind and only saw this, what a disheartened, disappointed, despairing man he would be! He had seen God's mind about it.

It is the Church that is in view in these epistles, and spirituality in Ephesians and Colossians means first of all an inward revelation of God's mind about the Church. It is a tremendous thing for spiritual strength, for spiritual power, for spiritual ministry, for spiritual impact, for spiritual food — yes, for every spiritual value to have really had a heart revelation of God's mind about the Church; not simply to have studied Ephesians and Colossians, but for it to have broken in upon your heart, to have seen it in an inward way. I say that is spirituality with an impact; it is spirituality with a dynamic; and what a dynamic it is!

18 MAR - A Re-Emphasis of the Reality of the Cross

It is an obvious fact that wherever the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ has been faithfully preached, it has not only brought hope and new life to some but also caused trouble with many more. Wherever this message has gone it has aroused antagonism. As it was a stumbling-block to the Jews and an absurdity to the Greeks in the first days, so it has ever since been unacceptable not only to men of the world but even to many religious people.

This is a fact, in spite of its being the most popular symbol. There is hardly a city in Christendom where the architecture, galleries of art, collections of literature and conservatoires of music do not give a prominent place to the sacred sign of the cross. It is a pity, then, that so much of the preaching and teaching in the Christian Church is either confined to the "Historic Jesus", which presents a crossless Christ, or to an interpretation of the cross which is much less than the Scriptural one.

Yet the consistent message of the whole Bible is that the Cross is God's way of salvation, His sufficient and His only way. It is further very clear that this has been the message which God has blessed to the salvation of men. It was dominant in New Testament days, and the recovery of, or re-emphasis upon, some vital and essential phase of that Cross gave rise to such movements as are signified by names like Luther, the Wesleys, Whitfield, Moody, Spurgeon and many other God-honoured men.

Why has the Cross always been such a maker of trouble and cause of offence? We need to make it plain that no exception is taken to the heroics of the Cross or its aesthetics. Sacrifice, suffering, unselfish devotion, self-effacing service for the good of others, enduring the penalty of setting oneself against current evils; these are romantic elements which are popularly appreciated. It is the deeper meaning which the Bible gives to the Cross which provokes men's opposition.

19 MAR - The Demand of the Cross for Separation from the World

In the Cross, Christ created a great divide between the old world and the new, a divide which cannot be bridged. Two distinctly different systems, scales of value, standards of judgment, sets of laws, stand contrasted on the two sides of the Cross. The system of each is not only quite different, but irreconcilable and forever mutually antagonistic. The cross demands an absolute distinctiveness of interest and objectives, relationships and resources. It draws the final distinction between the saved and the unsaved, between the living and the dead.

The apostle Paul said that by the Cross of Christ he had "*been crucified to the world*" and the world crucified to him. The Word of God emphatically declares that this age is evil and that "*the whole world lieth in the wicked one*". It says that the world's ways, motives, purposes, ideas and imaginations are all the opposite of God's. It further asserts that the world is utterly incapacitated from either receiving the revelation of the divine mind, growing of itself into the divine image, enjoying and appreciating real fellowship with God, or being entrusted with the privilege of co-operation with God.

Such capacities and relationships belong only to those whose new birth has delivered them from this present world. It is understandable that the world finds the condemnation of the Cross irritating and unacceptable, and it is to be feared that the presence of "worldliness" in the individual Christian life and in the Church is in direct contradiction to the essential purposes of the Cross. The Lord Jesus described His cross as being "*the judgment of this world*" (John 12:31). Those who follow Him must accept this verdict, and will consequently have to suffer from the offence of the Cross. The Cross condemns the world utterly and completely.

20 MAR - The Cross and the Flesh Cannot Exist Together

The Word of God declares that *"our old man has been crucified with Christ"* (Romans 6:6) and that *"One died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him"* (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

So far as God was concerned the history of the fallen race was concluded at Calvary. From that time onward, God's entire concern was the new creation. It is no use our trying to bring some of the old creation life into the new creation, for God will not accept it. Our human capabilities as well as our infirmities; what we call our better side as well as what we recognize to be our worst side; our goodness and our badness have all been included in that death. Henceforth we are called to live not on a human level but on a divine. In ourselves we possess nothing which is acceptable to God.

So often it is the assertion of some human element, some like or dislike, some ambition or some personal interest, which paralyzes the work of God in and through us. To regard not only our sins but ourselves as having been taken to the Cross by Christ is the only way by which those purposes of God can be wrought out through our lives. It may seem strange that while we so often deplore our lack of spirituality, we are so slow to accept the verdict of the Cross on our natural lives. We find it humiliating to accept the same verdict on ourselves as has been passed on the world, namely that of death by crucifixion. Nevertheless there is no other basis for a really spiritual life and witness: the Cross must work out death in us in order that the life of Christ may be released in full expression through us. So there may be a sense in which the Christian also has to face the offence of the Cross. Only by really knowing the power of the fact that he is crucified with Christ can he know the blessedness of the new life. When it is truly *"no longer I"*, then the way is opened for the affirmation: *"but Christ that liveth in me"*. The end is glorious but the way is the painful way of the Cross.

21 MAR - The Cross Casts Out the Devil

Here we touch the deepest cause of the offence, for the world and the flesh are only the instruments and weapons by which the great hierarchy of Satan maintains its hold and its existence as the controlling force. As He approached the Cross, Christ said: *"Now is the prince of this world cast out"* (John 12:31). As Paul reflected on the deep meaning of the Cross he said that by it: *"Christ stripped off principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, and triumphed over them"* (Colossians 2:15).

It is perfectly natural, then, that the great hierarchy of evil should by every means and resource seek to make the Cross of none effect. By the "pale cast of thought" it will dilute the message of the Cross; by pushing in the world's methods and spirit it will sap the spiritual vitality of the Church; by stirring up the flesh, the self and the old Adam it will cause schism, strain and disintegration; or by making much of the human elements in its artistic, aesthetic, heroic side, it will be blind to the need for regeneration. Reputation, popularity, the world's standards of success, are all contrary to the spirit of Christ, but they are the attractions by which the enemy engrosses the minds of many, sometimes even Christian ministers.

If, therefore, the Cross is preached in the full content of victory over and emancipation from the world, the flesh and the devil, it is to be expected that by hook or crook the intelligent forces of evil will stop at nothing to silence it, and will stir up every cause of offence which can be laid to the account of the Cross. No wonder that this message is repudiated or misrepresented, since it is God's solution to the problems of fallen man. Crucifixion is a harsh end; it reveals the utterness of God's repudiation of everything which belongs to the old creation. To the believer, however, the Cross as presented in the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

In conclusion let us not forget that the enjoyment of the full purpose of God, the experience of victory, and association in life with Him that sitteth on the throne in His glory are ours just in so far as we are one with the reality of the Cross as set forth in the Word of God. Perhaps it is best summed up for us in the words: *"They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and they counted not their lives dear unto the death"* (Rev: 12:11).

22 MAR - The Real Value of the Knowledge of Christ

The thing which is going forth from us, the thing which is the effect of our lives, is the knowledge of Christ. Everywhere, not just by us, but because of us, men are coming to a knowledge of Christ. The very object of our being is that Christ should be known because of us. The Divinely appointed way of men coming to know Christ is by our being here, moving amongst men.

That is simple, and perhaps we recognize and accept it, but the extra point which has to be noticed is this, that it is something more than our giving out knowledge concerning Christ; it is that we are to men the knowledge of Christ. There is a very big difference between giving out the truth concerning the Lord Jesus even in large measure, in a great fullness, truth which cannot be denied because it is the truth, and that strange, deep, indispensable element that we are that truth, that that truth itself takes its power, its strength from the fact that here are those who are the living expression of it; who have gone through the depths, been tested, been tried, been taken from place to place, been subjected to experiences of intense severity, and in the fires have learned Christ, and are therefore themselves the embodiment of the knowledge of Christ.

Wherever they go it is not that they have truth to give, but it is that men and women learn Christ because of them, and of them it can be said: It is not what they say only; there is something coming from them. There is an indescribable "something" which is an extra element to what they say. That thing has its reality in their being, and you feel that it is not only the words but the very virtue that comes out when they speak, or by reason of their presence. It is that of which the Apostle is speaking. That is the real value of any knowledge of Christ which we can give, which others may come to possess by us. It is not that they come through us to know more about Christ, but that there is a ministration of Christ. That is the thing for which we should seek the Lord very earnestly.

23 MAR - Fullness of Life in Christ

Yes, life in fullness is the question. Many bodies of Christians who have a great past and great tradition are deeply concerned with the inadequacy or lack of life amongst them today. This poverty of life is leading to great organized efforts, largely outside of the churches, to try to bring fullness about. Its lack has been the occasion for the abnormal development of many spurious and pseudo-spiritual movements and teachings. For want of it multitudes are passing by the churches as things which do not count. In many ways the great enemy has triumphed against the Church by countering its very life impact and testimony.

No, the point of the Apostle is that ... we should "*go on to full growth*." Life only begins in the foundation; its fullness requires the whole building. The peril is that even the first principles can become another legal system imposed upon people, and thus the things intended to lead to fullness of life may be made an arrest of life. Satan is very clever.

The recovery of life and its constant increase unto final fullness will only be as we get away from mere tradition and earthliness to a new living apprehension of Christ in His fullness as a Divine Representation of God's thoughts for His people; away from types, figures, symbols, to spiritual realities. Even if there are to be expressions of "first principles", they must come out of the living reality, and not be mere forms and things in themselves. We must do nothing with a view to perpetuating forms of doctrine and practice, but the expression must be that of life, and the spiritual meaning and value of everything must be ever growing. Only so shall we "*go on to full growth*".

24 MAR - The Manifestation of the Sons of God

We have received the Spirit, and are called sons because we have received the Spirit, but both in the case of Romans and Galatians the object of those letters was to obviate the grave peril which had come amongst believers of stopping short at a certain point in their spiritual life as born-again ones and not going on to perfection. Their peril was that of being turned aside by the work of the Judaisers who were coming in to try to arrest the spiritual progress of these believers and bringing in the law again and the Jewish system.

We may indicate here at once that the enemy always withstands very fiercely this matter of spiritual progress unto adoption. The most perilous thing to the enemy is *"the adoption of sons."* That is the end for him and he knows very well the significance for himself of the Lord's people going on with the Lord unto adoption. These Judaisers were the Devil's instruments to prevent the going on of these people to that glorious end.

So the Holy Spirit, through the Apostle, in these two letters, brings in the light of sonship; that is, he gives the knowledge of sonship in its fuller meaning, and says that basically, by having received the Holy Spirit, we are sons, but that sonship is not realized now in its full meaning and value. That is something unto which we are to go on, in which we are to continue; for the whole creation is waiting, groaning and waiting, for the literal consummation of that which is potential in our having received the Spirit, namely, *"the manifestation of the sons of God."* When that day comes, the creation will be delivered from its bondage of corruption. But against that deliverance the powers of evil work, and they worked through Judaisers as well as through many other things and people to prevent that glorious deliverance of the creation in the manifestation of the sons of God. So that what we have in Romans and Galatians is light about sonship, the basis of sonship established, but nothing said which carries with it the definite declaration that we have reached all that sonship means. Even in this word, *"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God,"* there is no saying that every Christian is a son of God; for is every Christian led by the Spirit of God? It is a spiritual position which is bound up with sonship in God's thought.

25 MAR - Spiritual Infancy Cannot Suffice

Now, in the practical way, let us note the difference between infants, spiritually, called *children* in the New Testament, and *sons*. The difference is simply this, that infants or children have everything done for them and they live in the good of that for which they themselves have had no exercise. That is the difference. An infant is one who lives on the good of other people's exercise and has never had any exercise for itself.

Everything has been done and prepared for it. Everything is coming to it as from the outside, and nothing has been done by the child itself. I think that is the main mark of an infant. But *a son*, in the spiritual and Scriptural sense, is one who is in the way of having the root of the matter in himself, who is progressively coming out of the realm where everything is done for him and where he has no exercise at all about things, to the place where it is going on *in* him and he is becoming one who is competent in himself, and no longer dependent upon what others do and say. Everything is not being brought readymade to him. There is a sense in which it is being made in him and he is making it in his own experience by the exercise of his own senses. That is the main difference, spiritually, between an infant or child, and a son.

These two words here are very helpful words "*senses exercised*." As children of God, we are regarded as having spiritual senses, and the object of God's dealings with us in His child-training is to bring those senses into exercise, so that by that exercise we may have experience: and what a tremendous thing is experience, and of what value. They are the people who count, these who have experience, and experience comes through the exercise of the senses.

But there are a great many people who never graduate from spiritual childhood and infancy to sonship; and why is it? You see, God does not sovereignly and by determination make sons of us. Oh no, God is not going to make sons of everybody on His own initiative, by His own power. We have a place in this. The responsibility, as you notice, in the Scriptures, is thrown back upon believers themselves, and it is made very clear in very strong words that the responsibility does rest upon them.

26 MAR - The School of Sonship unto Adoption

It just means this, that God is going to put and precipitate us into the most difficult situations. A situation is only difficult if you cannot cope with it. If you find the thing altogether beyond your measure; your measure of strength, your measure of wisdom, your measure of knowledge, then you are in difficulty: and that is the sort of thing the Lord does with people who mean business with Him. He puts them into difficult situations, and His whole object is to get their spiritual senses exercised, so that they may gain experience, may have the root of the matter in themselves. Thus all our nice, comfortable line of things falls away at once and we find ourselves in a realm with which we cannot cope, for which we are not sufficient. We have been in the habit of asking questions and getting them answered: now, no one can answer our questions, no answer comes from the outside.

Of course, people can say things to us and we may get a measure of help from those who have experience; but God is going to shut us up to the fact that it has to become ours by experience and in truth. It does not matter what anyone else says, we know quite well that we have to prove that for ourselves: they cannot lift us out of our difficulty. We constantly revert to the old childish way of running around asking somebody to solve our problems, but we have to come out of that. That is not going to work any longer. Really, deep down in us, we know that it does not work. We are not getting what we are after. We know now we have not to have something said to us, but something done in us. We have to be brought ourselves to a position, not to a mental solution; and if you are all the time trying to get intellectual solutions to your spiritual problems, you are still in the nursery.

If you are going really to come through to God's full and intended end, you have to know the Lord for yourself in an inward way, and unto that it may be necessary for the Lord to suspend all external helps and render all others incapable of coming to your rescue, flinging you wholly back upon Himself; to prove Him, to know Him, to be deeply, deeply exercised in your own spirit. That exercise enlarges capacity, and enlarged capacity means enlarged impartation from the Lord. That is the School of sonship unto adoption.

27 MAR - God Deals With Us as Sons

Spirituality, which is the nature of sonship, is not mental at all. That is to say, it is not a matter of having all our mental problems answered for us by somebody who has an answer to give us. You can never reach spirituality philosophically, logically, academically. You may go all over the world and get many questions answered, but that does not mean that you have come into spiritual enlargement. No, that is a very small realm, after all. Most of us have been there. We know quite well it never got us anywhere at all: and what a time we had and how disappointed we were!

The Lord Jesus Christ says, *"If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching"* (John 7:17). That is only the Gospel way of putting in germ form this great truth of sonship, namely, that you know by experience and not by intellectual inquiry and by people telling you from the outside. You do not come into anything by that way, for what logic can build up, logic can pull down. No, God dealeth with us as with what? Students in the academic sense? No, as with sons. And where do we locate sonship? God is the Father of our spirits; therefore our spirits are the seat of sonship and all His dealings are with our spirits. Thus it is a matter of spiritual growth, spiritual enlargement: that is growth in sonship unto adoption. Oh yes, it is experience.

You may be right in the midst of the most mature Christians who have gone that UPWARD way and you may be as one alone. You know you do not know as they know; but do not despair. If you are marked by this spirit of purposefulness with God, that means He has you in His school, and it is a good indication when you begin to get real deep spiritual exercise. We have all met those people who have lived on the basis of spiritual infancy all their lives, and they can never help us at all in our deepest need. Indeed, everything was so cut and dried with them they would not investigate anything deeper. They regarded anything deeper as quite superfluous and were quite satisfied and had a kind of answer to everything. But in our heart need they could not touch us at all. We have all been that way.

28 MAR - Spiritual Increase is Related to the Throne

Firstly, it does mean that the deepening of spiritual life, as it is called, or any other terms used for the same thing, is not a matter which is just to issue in our fuller blessing. So often people will bring it right down there to that level of fuller blessing, and we are very often tempted even there, in the time of fire and adversity, to react to this whole thing by saying, Well, if I have heaven, why need I trouble about all this, and why should I go through all this? Here are plenty of people just very happy and contented, they are saved and they know they are saved, and here am I who have sought to go on with God, and I am having the most awful time.

It seems to me that I have got the worst of the bargain, by wanting to go right on with God! If we look at it like that, purely from the personal point of view of blessing, we have missed our way, and we shall get into difficulties; because, as we have always sought to point out, when you come out of this spiritual infancy into the School of sonship, you graduate from what is personal as to your own interest and blessing into what is for the Lord and not for you. From that time forward the whole motive is, not what I am going to get, but what God is going to get. That is Ephesians. *"That ye may know what is... the riches of the glory of HIS inheritance in the saints."* Not what I am going to get now: that will follow, that will be all right, the Lord will be faithful, but it is something else. We have come into the school on the basis of God's eternal purpose, and God's eternal purpose does not begin and end when He has got us born again. God's eternal purpose is only reached when He has got us in the throne. Thus it is the Lord, for the Lord, and what the Lord is after that is the one consideration. It will be glory for me, but that is not the motive of it now. It is this great purpose with which we are called: that is what is governing everything, and it is in the terms of the throne.

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

29 MAR - God Uses Those who are 'Shut Up'

We are so prone to make our sojourn on this earth the big thing; I mean in the matter of what we are able to do, how much we can do and realize and see in our lifetime, and when we find the Lord shutting us up and limiting us and seeming to put us in prison, oft-times under the strain and pressure of it, when the iron enters into our soul as with Joseph, we begin to think we have missed the way. Life is going and it is all unfruitful; we are not doing anything. It is other people who are doing the thing, we are not. Thus we make so much of this present life in the matter of what we are able to do, as though that were everything, whereas (and this, of course, is no argument why we should be slack about doing) so often the Lord has got His greatest effectiveness in those who have been just shut right up, unable to do anything outside.

Is not that the truth about Paul himself? Of yes, it is, and Paul, as we have often pointed out, was the embodiment of the revelation which was given to him of the dispensation of the Church, and when we come to the end of his life, we have Paul, who had had such a wide scope of ministry, who had been able to do so much, we have this man, with all the values that are in him put into prison. But we get the concentrated essence of value from those prison experiences. We get the letter to the Ephesians, and that was worth Paul's going to prison, and anything like that will be worth all that we undergo in the School of sonship which sees a very great deal of what is here on the earth closed down, if only the heavenly may become the far more real and valuable as an expression in us and through us.

But the Lord is not so much concerned with how much we do now in this life. He is more concerned with the measure of Christ to which He can bring us in this life... *"till we all attain unto the... measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"* (Eph. 4:13). It will be Christ corporate who will come to take the kingdom of this world in the coming ages, and it is unto that the fullness of Christ that God is working preeminently in our experience, and that is the thing that matters most. It is the most difficult thing for us to accept; a supremely difficult thing for any active temperament to accept. To some it is martyrdom not to be doing something. It may be God's way of getting the enlargement of His Son in His members, the patience of Jesus Christ, among other things.

30 MAR - God's Need for Overcomers

God has this great thing in view. The issue comes up acutely and in an intensified form as we get near to the great end. In order to answer Satan, to have His answer in a corporate Man, God has to prepare you and me and a company of his people to take the throne, to be caught up unto God and to His throne, to rule the nations with a rod of iron. That, of course, has reference to tomorrow, the tomorrow of the ages I mean, and there is something beyond that, namely, our reigning with Him for ever and ever, another form of reigning. I aspire rather to the day after tomorrow than to tomorrow. Ruling with a rod of iron may appeal to us naturally, but we would sooner have the glorious reign where nothing wants a rod of iron. *"Now unto him... be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations of the age of the ages"* (Eph. 3:20-21). It is a big thing for which we go to school for a few years and suffer as we are suffering. It is easy to say that, but it is a painful thing, this school.

The Lord knows what He is doing with us. It is the matter of this overcoming, and, in the light of this school or this schooling, we can appreciate the word *"overcomer."* There is a lot of overcoming to be done. We have to get on top of a very great deal, and the getting on top of many things is leading us to get on top of the Devil and his kingdom. Presently, in the great hour when the sons are manifested, when the man child is caught to the throne, the creation is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

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

31 MAR - The Man Child of Revelation 12

This book of Revelation begins with a pronouncement from heaven that what is going to be shown is *"things which must shortly come to pass,"* and that pronouncement was made years and years after Christ had gone to heaven. It was future. Moreover, when Christ went to heaven, Satan was not cast out of heaven as is the case in Rev. 12; for, nearly forty years after Christ went to heaven, Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, and in chapter 6 we have this revelation of the nature and sphere of the Church's warfare: *"Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies."* Satan was not deposed when Christ was caught up to the throne. Thirdly, the dragon was not cheated of his prey in the case of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was slain by the dragon, and it is a part of the great and glorious truth that it was through death that He destroyed him that had the power of death, namely, the Devil. Satan, the dragon, thought he had swallowed up Christ perhaps, but he discovered that he had been swallowed up. But the Lord Jesus did not escape the great red dragon by a rapture: not at all. The dragon got him so far and slew him. But therein is the glorious sovereignty of God, and that is another line of truth altogether: God's sovereignty wrought in the very presence of Satan's triumph. But that is not this.

Then this woman is a paradox, a contradiction. She is at one and the same time in heaven clothed in glory and on the earth clothed with trouble and travail. She is clothed with the sun in heaven, and yet in the next breath she is travailing on the earth. Is not that just exactly what we have in the letter to the Ephesians about the Church? In the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus blessed with every spiritual blessing, and yet at the same time the letter shows us very clearly right at the heart of it that the Church is down here and in conflict. She has an earthly walk and is meeting things down here while at the same time in the heavenlies. A contradiction apparently: at one and the same time in heaven glorious and yet on earth in tribulation. That is the Church. Well, is not that enough, though there is a lot more here?

APRIL

1 APR - His Coming is Not a Matter of Time but of Faith

Take this matter of the coming of the Lord; and, of course, that is the coming of the Lord in glory, when He shall come in the clouds of glory, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints the coming in by the east of the glory of the Lord. Have you noticed that in any time in the dispensation, when spiritual people have been gathered together, and in their gathering together have been speaking or singing of the coming of the Lord, how spontaneously the glory rises and comes in? Why is it? Because the Holy Spirit does not live in time at all, He does not belong to time. The Holy Spirit is outside of time and He already has the end with Him and He is the Spirit of the end, and when we really get into the Spirit we are in the Holy Spirit's end.

If we dwell in the mind oh, this reasoning line of things! out of the Spirit, there is no joy. But when we let go and we are in the Spirit, we find ourselves with the Holy Spirit right at the end. We are outside of time, we are in the glory already in foreshadowing. The Holy Spirit is timeless and you get outside of time and you have everything; you have your finality, your fullness. Thus, when John was in the Spirit in the isle of Patmos, he got right through to the end of things very quickly, the thing which we in time have not reached yet. That is what I mean by apprehending this matter spiritually. Beware of apprehending prophecy as a mental thing.

The Holy Spirit in you in a living way will bring you into the good of things. Thus by the Spirit today we should stand with the light of the glorious fullness of the day of the Lord. We should be here as a testimony, not to prophetic things, not to teaching or doctrine about the Second Advent and all the problems connected therewith, but to the spiritual meaning of that. What is it? Why, that is the end to which God has been working right through the centuries, the one thing upon which His heart is set, in which He has His satisfaction, His glory, His praise, His fullness, and the Holy spirit is always there to make good something of that when we dwell upon it. He is there to be to us "*the earnest of our inheritance,*" and to make us know it is a matter of faith, after all.

2 APR - Acknowledging the Rights of God

While the Person of the Lord Jesus as God manifest in the flesh is the sum of all revelations, it requires the Cross to give the full MEANING and reveal the full VALUE of that manifestation; it demands the Church to display the full CONTENT of that manifestation ultimately; and it calls for the City to define the NATURE of that manifestation. In leading men on to the appreciation of the Person, God begins with the Cross. If the House is the House of the Divine Son, and if the City is the City of the great King, then the House and the City are based upon the Cross. Moreover, if the House and the City are for the glory of God in Christ and His universal worship, then the Cross represents the nature of worship and the way of glory.

To put this more precisely: If the Lord has in view a people for His glory, by whom the content of the Son of Man is ultimately displayed to the universe, then this people will be fundamentally A PEOPLE OF THE ALTAR. This we believe to be the all-inclusive theme of Scripture. The Cross is the central recognition of the eternal rights of God. At the Cross and in the Cross all the rights of God from eternity to eternity are recognized and acknowledged. That is central to Calvary. God has rights. God's rights are that the whole universe should render Him undivided, unrivalled, unreserved worship, acknowledging that all things are His by right, and that no one else in the universe has a right before Him. That great fact is here gathered up in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He brings to God in His own Person His rights, offering Himself in the greatness of who He is and what He is the rights of God.

God, by His Son, created the world for His Glory. The Holy Spirit was agent in the creation of the world for the Glory of God, in order that the whole earth should be full of His Glory. The Holy Spirit is likewise agent in the redemption of the world for the Glory of God. Redemption is unto God: it is bringing back to God His rights, and the Holy Spirit is the agent in this redemptive work which has the Glory of God as its objective, just as the Holy Spirit was the agent in creation for the same end.

3 APR - The Two Worships

The worship of the beast is one which has been going on ever since Lucifer secured a following, a reverence from angels in high estate in heaven. When he found it in his own heart to make a bid for the place of the Almighty – to exalt his throne above the clouds, to ascend into the heavens, to be equal with the Most High (Is. 14:13-14) – he managed to gather to himself a company, all with the intent of drawing heaven's worship away from God to himself; and ever since that lifting up of his heart in that infamous ambition another worship has been going on. He drew that company with him, the company of angels *"who kept not their own principality"*, and are *"kept in everlasting bonds under darkness"* (Jude 6). Then he appeared on the earth, and sought again to usurp the place of God in the worship of His Creation here; and in this he succeeded, and became, by reason of a conquest and the consent of man, *"the god of this age"*, *"the prince of this world"*.

From that moment he set up a spiritual system of worship which is perceivable behind the whole record of history. We have the breaking in of this evil element all along the line of worship, wherever and whenever the rights of God are recognized by sacrifice. Immediately Abel recognized the rights of God and erected his altar, slaying his sacrifice and shedding sacrificial blood, in the simplicity of the testimony of faith that here on the earth God has sole rights, there broke in this very thing against that testimony. The murderer came in to withstand and destroy the testimony, with Cain as his instrument, who also set up an altar and made a pretence in his darkened understanding to worship God. But he never got through to God, and that was the very ground upon which the Satanic element of jealousy and pride was churned up within him, and he became, because the Devil had got a purchase upon him, the instrument against the worship of God. The enemy's scheme is deep laid; he knows what he is doing. Through the other worship he breaks in against the recognition of the Divine Rights, the worship of God; and from Abel onward it is always so.

4 APR - Refusing to Give Satan Any Place

From the very birth of the Lord Jesus, it is known to Satan who He is and the scheme is put into operation to engulf Him in the massacre of a whole multitude of infants. The cruelty of the evil one to murder a mass to get ONE! He is after One, he is not after the crowd.

We have no record of any efforts of the enemy from that time until the Lord steps across the line which runs between His private life and His public life and then He meets the enemy immediately. And what is the question? "If Thou wilt... worship me" (Matt. 4:9). That is what he is after. It is right out he is betrayed at once; and it is that issue right up to the Cross. "If Thou wilt worship me." It comes in a multitude of different ways. Satan only wants an acknowledgment, the ascribing to him of some rights in the universe.

But, ah, the Lord never recognized those rights just as Mordecai refused to recognize the right of Haman. This is one of the most beautiful things in the book of Esther. Here is Haman claiming to be somebody: he has gained eminence, and everybody is bowing to him. But Mordecai refuses to recognize any of his glory, and ignores it all. And you remember Haman's story to his family. 'I am a great man; I have much goods, many children: but what is the good of it all if this one man will not recognize me?' (Esther 5:9-13). It is a foreshadowing. There is One who counts more than all the rest, and until He can be captured or got out of the war the enemy's fullness is divided. That One will not recognize Satan and that One is destined to bring about his doom.

The Lord Jesus met that all the way through, refusing to attribute to Satan one atom of right in this universe. He was out to challenge that, to secure all the rights for God in His own Person, and to come to the Throne Himself with those rights. And when He has done it we see the same thing going on with the Church. It is still the Church's great issue: the worshippers and the worshipped, and the place or the no-place of the enemy.

5 APR - The Cross Seeks to Remove Whatever Serves Satan

Why has the Holy Spirit come? Oh! Not that we might have blessings and what we call power and influence and opportunity and service. No, He has come as Representative and Agent of the Christ, who has secured the rights of God in His own Person. To bring about the recognition and realization of the rights in this earth that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The second thing that comes out of this is that the Holy Spirit always demands the ground of the Cross for His activity, if the glory of God is in view. But then, the Cross registers the removal of all that serves Satan. What was it that served Satan in Cain? Covetousness, personal ambition, jealousy, pride! That worked itself out in the murder of Abel which was an expression of hatred for God. What was it that served Satan in Balaam? Greed, covetousness, world-gain. The Cross registers the removal by destruction of all that served Satan, and for us it is gathered up in one word: SELF.

What a wide word that is what a comprehensive word! The stronger term is "the flesh". Some people do not know what you mean when you talk about the "flesh". They begin to think of positive vices and iniquities of deep dye. But the "flesh" is only another term for "self". Self is a very subtle thing, a many-sided thing. It includes self-interest, self-glory, self-preservation, self-realization, self-advancement all those considerations of influence and good-standing and prestige and following, and being understood and spoken well of. The phases of "self" are legion, and they, every one of them, serve Satan.

Moreover, they serve him in this other sense, that they divide the rights of God and usurp the place of God: and therefore, wherever there is the slightest suggestion or insinuation of self, the Glory of God is obscured and the Cross has got to be applied there. The Cross is not applied in the work of God just because God wants us out of it for the sake of having us out of it, to humble, to crush, to break us; no, it has this great end in view HIS GLORY. The Cross, dear friend, means utter devotion to God's glory.

6 APR - The Loss of Distinctiveness

From the history of Israel and the history of the Church one thing springs into light and is unmistakably evident, that is that there is no substitute for light once given by God.

Unfaithfulness to light once given by God results inevitably and unavoidably in confusion, weakness, bondage, limitation, and tentativeness.

These are clearly the features of Babylon in Israel's case, and of the Church's case in the twentieth century.

Someone has said that

"The Church of the first century was power-conscious.

The Church of the twentieth century is problem-conscious."

We could not improve on that, but we might paraphrase it by saying that

The Church of the first century was PURPOSE conscious.

The Church of the twentieth century is perplexity conscious.

'Ezekiel' is peculiarly the Old Testament book of God's reaction in judgment to lost distinctiveness of purpose. 'Revelation' is its New Testament counterpart, with many similar characteristics in symbolism.

When anything becomes something in itself, turning, in doctrine and practice, into a circle instead of a way and a means, confusion, frustration, and bondage become its characteristics; limitation and powerlessness will mark its existence. It becomes a matter of lost distinctiveness.

That distinctiveness of life and testimony is demanded by God is self-evident in the whole Bible. A word frequently used to express God's thought as to His people is the word 'peculiar'.

7 APR - The Impact of God's Purpose

The one all-important note which is so manifestly lacking in the Church at this time is the note of authority. This was a recognized and acknowledged feature of the Lord's presence and ministry when He was here in person. This also was an unmistakable characteristic of the Church in early days. The loss of this spiritual authority has let in many alternatives and substitutes, so that the present system is one of pretense, make-believe, show, striving after effect. The efforts and failures are pathetic.

But what is the essence of authority? It is not forcefulness of expression, neither is it strength of conviction. These and many other things may, or may not, accompany true authority, but they are not authority. The essence of authority is, that what is said or represented carries in its very truth the power of destiny. Sooner or later, that presentation will show itself to be a criterion. People and things will stand or fall according to the attitude taken toward it. In a time of upheaval, shaking, testing and trouble, people and work will stand or collapse, and the cause will be in either case that which God gave. The truth will be vindicated. This is borne out so evidently in Israel's history. This is what lies at the root of the first three chapters of the 'Revelation'. This is the explanation of the triumph or tragedy of so much that had its origin in God, and of many Christian lives. Authority is something that will have to be measured up to, you cannot get away from it. In spiritual things it is God. There can never be something of God present for which we shall not have to give an account.

The Holy Spirit always speaks with authority, and when He speaks, destiny is present. As "*all authority*," has been given to Jesus, God's Son, in Heaven and on earth, the Holy Spirit presents and testifies to Him as the Horizon of judgment and destiny. There is impact when Christ is preached in the Holy Spirit. The proof of reality is not in the form of teaching, however orthodox and right. Neither is it in the form of practice and procedure, however correct. Isaiah was told to "*declare unto my people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins*", and then was added, "*Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways*" (Isa. 58:1, 2). The truth and reality is in the spiritual impact that brings people face to face with God.

8 APR - The Integration of God's Purpose

When we look at those parts or that section of Ezekiel's prophecies which have to do with the existing condition of Israel, we see a people disintegrated, scattered, and disrupted. God's view of them was revealed in the vision of the valley of dry bones: many very many bones: spread over the valley; unarticulated and uncoordinated: bare, dry, and useless by reason of their dividedness. What a true picture of the state where the vision of God's all-integrating purpose has been lost! How true are the words we read in Proverbs 29:18: "*Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint [fall apart; go to pieces]*".

The mighty movement of the Spirit in the valley was not just motivated by the desire to have the bones together "bone to its bone" and clothed and covered. It was governed by the purpose of Israel's election, to be the channel through which after the flesh God's Son would come. Unity is always in God's thought to bring Christ in in fulness. To hinder that all hell is set on the disintegration of the people of God.

The real incentive to union is the recognition that by it the fulness of Christ will come in. This is 'Ephesians', and if 'Ezekiel' ends with the triumphant shout, "*The Lord is there*", it is the effect and result of the vision and apprehension of the Man on the Throne, and God's purpose concerning Him.

Immediately after the Cross the disciples and the followers of Jesus were very much like the bones in the valley. The metaphor is changed but the effect was the same. "*I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad*" (Matt. 26:31). Scattered and peeled! Helpless and shattered! But note the effect of the Spirit's energies on the Day of Pentecost. Gathered and integrated! Co-ordinated and unified! Clothed and nourished! They were on their feet an army. The integration was truly the effect of the energies of the Spirit, but the great feature of their integration was the vision and power of the Divine purpose concerning Jesus Christ. The book of 'Acts' is the book of Purpose energized by the Holy Spirit, and it is the book of concerted action on that basis.

9 APR - God's Reaction in Purpose

History is marked by repeated reactions on the part of God. We have devoted a whole book to show something of these specific reactions ([*God's Reactions to Man's Defections*](#)), but it is necessary to mention it here in special relation to the Purpose. We have seen that God's method and instrument in this matter has been an elect people. Election particularly relates to purpose, it is not willy-nilly, nor arbitrary. To fail in the matter of purpose is to nullify the election and to lose not essentially salvation, but certainly the inheritance, i.e., that specific inheritance connected with the vocation.

The Old Testament representation of this is Israel. The nation was "*an elect nation*" for a particular purpose. The whole nation was called according to that purpose. When the body as a whole lost its vocational character it was rejected and sent into exile. The vocation was recovered in a Remnant. This Remnant was a rebuke and example to the whole. When eventually and ultimately Israel the nation forfeited their vocation among the nations by rejecting the very One who was to justify both their election and their existence, they were rejected and lost their place among the nations, as for the last nearly two thousand years.

The Church as the eternally elect body then came in in relation to a far greater and higher purpose than that related to Israel. Let it be emphasized that the existence of the Church is bound up with purpose. Failure here will mean spiritual Babylon, i.e., confusion, bondage, weakness, and frustration. But God reacts in a Remnant "*Overcomers*"; and throughout history a thin red line of faithful and true witnesses individual and corporate is traceable, when the general state has been decadent.

It is very instructive to note the way of the Spirit in His movements to recover this government of purpose. The movements and their features are all so consistent and harmonious with the object.

10 APR - The Essential Vocation

Ninety times in 'Ezekiel' the designation "*Son of man*" is used. Among the Prophets this is peculiar to Ezekiel. We know that the favourite title chosen by the Lord Jesus Himself was "*The Son of man*". Only twice in the eighty-two times where it occurs was it used by others. There is a similarity and a difference. Ezekiel has no article: he is just "son of man". Jesus always has the article "*The Son of man*". The similarity is not in Person, but in Vocation. The infinite difference is in Person. The vocational similarity is found in the meaning of the title. It is that of identification with man; representation of man. The idea is a very large one; it brings into view God's concern for mankind. Not Israel, but all mankind is God's concern.

Israel's vocation was meant to be to all men. The Church's vocation is to "*all the world*". Christ is identified with and representative of man in the thought of God. This is the essential feature of the prophet's ministry, which ministry is to reveal the Man, and to lead to Him. Anything that puts the minister in a separate class and marks him off as apart from other men is a violation of a principle of the Spirit's way, and will, sooner or later, prove to be a limitation among men. Ezekiel said that he "sat where they sat". That was not the condescending act of a superior, an official, one of a special class. No, it was a man amongst men, seeing with their eyes and feeling with their hearts, yet seeing with the eyes of God and feeling with the heart of God. Jesus adopted no garb, habit, tone of voice, or badge to mark Himself off as different or apart from others. There was ample prejudice, suspicion, criticism, and that kind of thing to question His authority, and He never tried to overcome this attitude or get any advantage by artificial, official, or formal means.

Nothing was assumed, put on, or feigned to make an impression and gain acceptance. The Holy Spirit of anointing was His sole basis and source of authority. That was enough and the centuries testify to it. Note then again, the title chosen by Him and linked by Him with every phase of His life and history was not one that men would look upon with honour, respect and awe, but "*the Son of man*". Different indeed, but in nature, not in anything external. At the same time remember who He was! *He "emptied himself... and being found in fashion as a man..."* (Phil. 2:7, 8). That is said of the One who, in His own right, was equal with God.

11 APR - The Vessel as a 'Sign'

"Son of man... I have set thee for a sign"

"Say, I am your sign." (Ezek. 12:6, 11; 24:24)

The prophet himself was a sign. There were many signs, but these were God's ways with the prophet to make him the sign. Those ways of God with His servant were not ordinary and usual ways. They were unusual, singular, and often very enigmatical, incomprehensible, and inscrutable. The thing to note is that with God the history of the vessel was the history of the people pre-written. He went through their history in advance of them. He not only prophesied, he was the prophecy.

Paul, the Apostle, was a sign of this dispensation in this way. If Paul was "a chosen vessel" for the special purpose of bringing in the particular purpose of this dispensation, namely, the revelation of the Church, its nature, place, and vocation in the eternal counsels of God (the stewardship of the mystery, he called his ministry); then Paul's history ran along those lines from his conversion to his departure to be with Christ. We make the observation without embodying the great amount of evidence here.

Is this not a law of God when Purpose is in view? Those who are *"the called according to his purpose"*, and especially those individual or collective who are instruments or vessels of the Purpose, are taken through quite unusual and, otherwise, inexplicable experiences. Theirs is no ordinary way. The Purpose unto which they are called, if they are committed to the Holy Spirit, will be wrought into their very beings. Theirs is no studied or second-hand ministry. They are the message before they speak it. For them to have to hand up their message would be to part with their very life. It is a very costly way, but would we have it otherwise? Such a ministry is only possible if a total break with all else has been made. Ezekiel had to do things that made him a laughingstock to others. Sometimes they thought that he was mad. Whatever they thought and said, the time came when they could see their own experience in the light of his personal history. They literally went the way that he had gone symbolically. How effective was his life with God!

12 APR - The Church as a Watchman

It is not too strong a thing to say that, in human life, everything hangs on a sense of purpose. Lose that, and we lose all motive and incentive in living and working.

Someone else has said: 'The outstanding feature of our time is confusion, a depressing consciousness of futility and helplessness, and secret despair.' This, and much more is all too true, and, for this reason, there is a primary demand to return to that realm where 'Purpose' is a dominant feature. It is not wrong to say that the revealed truth that the world is not going to be an easier and better place to live and work in as we approach the end of the age, constitutes the main battle for faith where God's people are concerned, and it would be a very easy thing to let hands hang down, and for the knees to become feeble.

A third specific point has to follow on and fit into our previous chapter, but we must continually keep in view the full setting and context. What we have pointed out is that the idea of Purpose stands over the whole Bible revelation. This all-governing idea explains all God's activities and interests in creation and men. In the Scriptures it is clear that God's Son, now known as Jesus Christ, our Lord, is the inclusive and ultimate sphere of all that Divine Purpose: that His Coming into this world; His life, death, resurrection, and exaltation are all immediately and exclusively related to the realization of the Purpose: that the Holy Spirit has come as the age-long custodian of God's Purpose concerning His Son.

Further, it is revealed that the Church is the eternally elect vessel and instrument in which, and through which that Purpose is to be in the first place realised, and then administered in larger realms in "*the ages to come*": that it is the Church, as the Body of Christ, which is "*called according to his purpose*", and "*chosen in him before the foundation of the world*": and that individuals can and will only come into the realization of that Purpose in an organically related way in the Body corporate.

Again, this "*on high calling*" explains the particular and peculiar spiritual history the discipline, suffering, and trial of those who are so called. Any truly spiritual ministry unto this Purpose, and any representation of it in companies of committed people of God do experience and suffer every wile, stratagem, and malicious effort of the evil powers to break them up, wear them out, pull them down onto earthly ground, force them to compromise, and so on. They are the object of every kind of misrepresentation, treachery, cruelty, ostracism, and discrediting.

13 APR - A Watchman

Israel ought to have been a watchman to all the nations (illustrated, e.g., by Jonah and Nineveh). This is what the Church ought to be to the world. This is what every local church ought to be to its locality. But, in 'Ezekiel' where things are bad in the nation, the designation and its meaning apply to the people of God themselves; and in this connection we consider it here. What we say then is, in the first place, to the servants of God.

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 3:17; 33:1-9).

This is not an altogether new idea or title for the Lord's servant. It occurs more than once in Isaiah in an objective and kind of abstract way. No one else but Ezekiel is mentioned as having been specifically appointed to this position. It will be noted that this appointment took place very early in his ministry. What then was the particular function of the Watchman, and what were his essential characteristics?

Firstly, and supremely, he was the custodian of the elect purpose of the people to whom he was appointed. The very existence of those people as related to the Divine purpose was very largely in his hands. In this respect, perhaps one of the most clamant and urgent needs of our time is of this prophetic function. There are Evangelists, whose function is related to the unsaved, and positively not the oversight of a local church. For the Evangelist to get or be put into such a position will sooner or later mean that he frustrates the full purpose of God by keeping God's people to a very limited and elementary measure of Christ. This is the tragedy of any evangelistic work which stops at itself. It is the tragedy of many so-called Gospel Missions and Mission Halls. They often serve to abort full purpose and spiritual maturity. Let the Evangelist anointed of God do his work, but let him and all others recognize that his work is only relative and not something in itself apart.

The world is now seeing the terrible spectacle of Christians and a 'Church' unable to meet and go through the awful fires of testing, and without the tremendous impact of an authoritative witness and message. In a day of spiritual declension or weakness, it is the Prophetic function that is needed.

14 APR - The Lord Is There

A criterion is that by which the truth and value of any matter is determined. By such-and-such a principle or fact the whole thing stands or falls; is true or false. That then is our objective in relation to Divine Purpose. Can we put our finger definitely upon that Divine Purpose and see that it is the climax, the culmination of all God's ways? Well, what is that climax, that one Divine end, by which everything is to be judged, now and forever?

The book of Ezekiel is not only a book about prophecies and history, but a book of spiritual principles with a much greater context than earth and time. When we reach the end of that book, we find ourselves in the presence of that great ultimate, that universal climax, that realised purpose, and it is all summed up in the brief, though vast, phrase: "*The Lord is there*".

What a wide field is opened by that climacteric phrase! The Bible is bounded by this supreme concept. It opens and closes with the presence of God with man. It is the governing issue throughout all its pages and phases. There are almost countless aspects of this one thing, but, be it so, the issue is just this alone: Is the Lord there or is He not? Is the Lord in that or is He not? Is the Lord with that, with him or her, in that place, in that decision or course, or is He not? That is the criterion. His presence with unfallen man and His departure from disobedient man is an eternal principle. His presence in the beginning indicates purpose. His presence by the Incarnation of His Son is unto the redemption of the purpose. His presence by the Holy Spirit is to make that purpose actual as an inward thing.

The major aspects force us back to basic considerations. Let us not hurry on with greatness of vision, but pause and quietly tell ourselves that what is more vital and important than anything else in all our life is that the Lord is with us. Futility, vanity, disappointment and remorse will most certainly overtake us, sooner or later, and overtake all our undertakings if, at length, it should be found that the Lord is not with us. It is a perilous thing to go on without the Lord. Moses, who did know something, cried: "*If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence*". Mere assumption in this matter may well prove to have been fatal presumption. "*Supposing him to be in the company*" may lead to the necessity to retrieve the value of the whole journey (Luke 2:44).

15 APR - The Holy Spirit's Exactness

If the Holy Spirit is jealous for the main object, He is shown to be equally jealous for the detailed features. This can be seen in various connections.

If the creation and man were intended for the presence of God, they had to be a meticulous expression of God's mind. God was Himself the Architect. God was Himself working scrupulously to a Pattern. (The whole Bible shows that Pattern to be His Son.) The Holy Spirit became the Custodian and energy of that Pattern. Nothing was haphazard, left to chance, or left to man or angels to conceive or design.

Another great and forceful example of the principle was the Tabernacle of Testimony. Here, again, nothing in design, even to a pin or a stitch, a measurement, a material, a position, was left to man. It was all to be according to "*the pattern shewn*". The Holy Spirit took charge of the artisans, and only when 'all things were according to the pattern' did God presence Himself. The slightest deflection would have meant that it was only an empty shell without God.

The same is to be noted in the Temple of Solomon and the Temple of Ezekiel's vision.

When it comes to the consummate presentation of that which (Him who) is typified in the Old Testament the Incarnate Son of God "*Emmanuel, God with us*" again, the Spirit of God takes over and governs all the details of His conception, birth, life, history, works, death, resurrection, etc. See the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus. God's Son will Himself declare that "*the Son can no nothing of [out from] himself, but... the Father*" (John 5:19).

16 APR - The Corporate Body Which is the Church

The Architect is God the Father.

The Builder is God the Son.

The Custodian and energy is God the Holy Spirit.

Here, again, nothing in conception and planning is left to angels or men. If man interferes, insinuates himself, and tries to organize or run the Church, so much the worse for the man, as the New Testament both shows in results and declares in words. Nothing but confusion, frustration and shame can follow man's hand upon that which exists wholly for the presence of God.

The last chapters of the Bible must be read in the light of all the immediately preceding chapters. There we see the progressive judgment in every realm beginning with the churches of everything unsuitable to the presence of the Lord. The end is all that removed and a state symbolically represented which is suitable to Him, and "*the Lord is there*".

What a challenge all this is: to the Christian to "*walk in the Spirit*"; for the Church and the churches to be governed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

The hand of man is a defiled thing. Only "*he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart*" can "*ascend into the hill of the Lord*". We may not put our hand on one another for judgment or control. We may not put our hand on the House of God. We may not (like Uzza) put our hand on the ark. Woe to Uzzah, to Ananias and Sapphira, to Diotrophes, who touch the holy things of the Lord's presence with fleshly hands of natural strength, ambition, and pride!

How safe it is to be where the Lord is if, through the Cross, we are made suitable. How dangerous it is even to draw near without taking off the shoes of association with the cursed world!

17 APR - God's End Christ All and In All

The intention in the heart of God in bringing this universe into existence was that, ultimately, the whole creation should display the glory and supremacy of His Son, Jesus Christ; and this one little fragment, "*and in Him all things hold together*", says quite clearly that but for the Lord Jesus Christ the whole universe would disintegrate, fall apart; it would be without its uniting factor; it would cease to have a reason for being maintained as a complete and concrete whole. Its holding together, its failure to disintegrate and break up, is because of this: God has determined that the Lord Jesus shall be the centre, the governing centre, of this whole universe, and He God's Son is the explanation of creation. But for Him, there never would have been a creation. Take Him out, and creation loses its purpose and its object, and need not go on any longer. "*Christ is all, and in all*", was the thought, the ruling thought, in the mind of God in the creation of the universe.

That may leave you cold in some measure and not get you very far, but I venture to think that what I am now going to say will get you a little further and warm your hearts; for the prospect is this, that when God has things as in eternity past He determined to have them and He is going to have them so every atom of this whole universe will display the glory of Jesus Christ. You will not be able to look at anything or anyone without seeing Christ glorified. A blessed prospect!

It is a happy thing when, as a company of the Lord's children, we can be together for hours on end or even days on end; when we are occupied with the Lord as our one common interest and are all taken up with Him. When we have a time like that and go back into the world, what a different atmosphere we find! How chilled we feel! It is a fine thing to meet the Lord in His children and to be shut up to Him like that; but even then it is only in part. But the eternal day is coming when there will be no going back into the world on a Monday morning after a day in the courts of the Lord; when we shall be touching nothing else but the Lord Jesus, and the whole universe will be full of Him "*Christ all, and in all*"! That is God's end. That is what He has determined; all displaying the Lord Jesus; all for Him.

18 APR - Man is Born to be Like Him

What is the explanation of man? What is the explanation of Adam as the first man? There is one little passage of Scripture which answers that. "*Adam... who is a figure of Him that was to come*", that is, Christ (Rom. 5: 14). A figure of Him that was to come; that is the explanation of man.

God intended that every man entering this world should be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Multitudes will miss it, but there will be multitudes such as no man can number, out of every tribe and kindred and nation and tongue, who will realize it. What a high calling! What a different conception of man that is from that which is popularly held, and what a thing to be missed! And yet there are many who say complainingly that if they had had their way they would never have come into this world. There have been those who, in an hour of eclipse, cursed the day that they saw the light. Ah, but something has gone wrong there; that is not how the Lord meant it to be, and however much we may have blue days, when we wonder whether really it is worthwhile after all, let us come back to God's thought in our very being. It is our tremendous privilege, the highest honour that could ever have been conferred upon us from the Divine standpoint, that we should have been born.

We do not always feel or speak like that, but we are constantly compelled to bring ourselves back to God's point of view about this and to remember that His purpose is to have a universe peopled with such as are conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ, a people who are a universal manifestation of Christ glorified with the glory of the Father. That is a privilege, an honour, something to be born for! That is the explanation of man.

Things of course went wrong: God's purpose was interfered with. It could never be finally thwarted, but there was another who did determine that, so far as it was in his power, that universal display of Jesus Christ that 'all-in-all-ness' of the Lord Jesus should never be; one who desired to have that for himself that he should be universal lord of heaven and earth. That interference for a time has made a great deal of difference. It has interfered with man and made him other than God intended him to be. It has spoiled the image.

19 APR - Redemption's Purpose

"*Christ is all, and in all*", is the explanation of redemption for there is redemption only through the Cross of the Lord Jesus. What is the explanation of the Cross? What is the explanation, on the one hand, of all that atonement, that redemptive work of the Lord Jesus in dealing with sin, and having universal sin laid upon Him, and being made a curse for us, in our place? God redeemed mankind so that Christ may be all and in all.

On the other hand, as the complement of that, what is the explanation of that Cross being wrought in the believer so that the believer becomes united with Him in the likeness of His death and burial as a spiritual experience? all that application of Calvary which is so painful, so terrible to pass through: yes, the disintegrating of the "*old man*"; the cutting off of the "*body of the flesh*"; that inward knowledge of the power of the Cross, so terrible to the flesh. What is the explanation? Beloved, it is that Christ may be all, and in all.

Why are we broken? To make room for the Lord Jesus. Why are we brought down to the dust by the Holy Spirit as He works Calvary's death into us? In order that the Lord Jesus may take the place that we in the flesh have occupied. We get wrong sometimes about this application of the Cross. The enemy is always at our elbow to insinuate and suggest the unkindness of God to smash us, to humiliate us, to bring us to nothing, and to say that there is no end to this thing, seeking thus to get us down.

Beloved, the Cross was intended only to make the Lord Jesus all, and in all, for us; and is it not true that, because of the way that the Lord has dealt with us, the way in which He has applied the Cross, planting us into that death and burial, we know Him in a way in which we never knew Him before? We know quite well that our chief enemy is ourselves, our flesh. This flesh gives us no rest, no peace, no satisfaction; we have no joy in it. It obsesses, engrosses, constantly struts across our path to rob us of the very joy of living. What is to be done with it? Well, in and by the Cross we are delivered from ourselves; not only from our sins, but from ourselves; and being delivered from ourselves we are delivered into Christ, and Christ becomes far more than we.

20 APR - Why the Lord Deals with Us

The Cross is a painful process, but it is a blessed issue; and those amongst us who may have had the greatest agony along this line would, I believe, testify that what it has brought to us of the knowledge and riches of the Lord Jesus has made all the suffering worthwhile. So the work of the Lord for us and the work of the Lord in us, by the Cross, is only intended in the Divine thought to make room for the Lord Jesus.

The brazen altar of the Tabernacle, as that of the Temple, was a very big altar. Yes, the altar has to be a big one; there has to be a big place for Christ Crucified. He is to fill all things and He is to be the fulness of all things, and there is going to be no room for us in the end. Does that strike you with dismay? Surely not. So the Cross, the work of redemption through that Cross, has for its explanation just this, that Christ may be all, and in all; that in all things He may have the preeminence.

This, then, is the explanation of our experiences why the Lord deals with us as He does; why believers go through the experiences that they do go through; why they go through things that no one else seems called upon to go through; why sometimes they almost envy unbelievers the easy time that so many of them have. This explains the Lord's dealings with Israel in the wilderness. Even after their deliverance from Egypt's bondage and tyranny, there was heart-break and agony. Why this chastening? In the wilderness, they still hark back to Egypt. The work the Lord is doing in them is in order that He may be everything in and to them. If He cuts off their natural supplies, it is only to show what their heavenly supplies are. If He cuts off their natural power, it is that they may come to know the power of the heavens. Whatever He may take them out of or lead them into, is with a view to taking them out of themselves and that He Himself may be all, and in all.

This is the explanation of our difficulties. The Lord knows how best to deal with each one of us, and He does not use standardized methods. He deals with you in one way and with me in another. He knows how to lead us into experiences which are most calculated to bring us to where the Lord is all, and in all.

21 APR - God's Thought for Christian Service

What is Christian service according to the mind of God? It is not necessarily our having a very full program of Christian activities. It is not that we are always busy in what we call 'things of the Lord'. It is not the measure and amount of our activity and business, not the degree of our energy and enthusiasm in the things of the kingdom of God. It is not our schemes, our enterprises for the Lord. Beloved, the test of all service is its motive. Is the motive, from start to finish, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence, that Christ may be all, and in all?

You know the temptations and the fascination of Christian service; the fascination of being busy, of being occupied with many things; having your program, schemes, enterprises; being in it, and always at it. There is a peril there which has caught multitudes of the Lord's servants. The peril is that it brings them into prominence, it makes the work theirs; it is their work, their interests, and the more they govern the thing and run it the more pleased they are.

There is a great difference between Christian service as mere enjoyment of activity, with the fascination of it and all the advantages and facilities it provides for ourselves, and its gratification to our flesh and this, "*Christ all, and in all*". Sometimes this latter is achieved by our being put out of action; and then is the test, as to whether we are, or are not, quite satisfied to be altogether put out of work if only the Lord can be the more glorified thereby. If only He can come into His own, it does not matter a scrap whether we are seen or heard. We are getting somewhere, in the grace of God, when we are quite content to be put up in a corner, unseen and unnoticed, if thereby the Lord Jesus can come into His own more speedily and fully.

The challenge of service according to God's thought is just this What are we doing it for? Do we want to be in the work, because we like to be busy? Or is it utterly and only that, by any means, He may come into His own, that God's end may be realized? If He can be all, and in all, by our death as well as by our life, have we come to the place where we truly desire "*that... Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death*"? (Phil. 1:20). That is the explanation of service from God's standpoint.

22 APR - What Is the Church?

God's thought is not Christianity; it is not churches as organized centres of Christianity; it is not the propagation of Christian teaching and enterprise. God's thought is to have a people in the earth in whom, and in the midst of whom, Christ is all, and in all. That is the Church. We have got to revise our ideas. In the thought of God the Church begins and ends with this the absolute supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ: and what God is always after is to get together those of His people who will most fully realize that thought of His, and be unto Him the satisfaction of His own eternal desire, the Lord Jesus in all things having the pre-eminence, and being all, and in all. He passes by the great institution, the so-called 'Church' and He is with those who in themselves are of a humble and contrite spirit and who tremble at His word, and with whom the Lord Jesus is the one and only object of worship and adoration. Such satisfy the heart of God. Such, for Him, are the answer to His eternal quest.

You notice the word of God says that. Look at it again in Col.3:11: "*Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond-man, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.*" There they have "*put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created Him.*" Look closely into that and you will find this is the corporate man, the Church, the Body of Christ, "*the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*" (Eph. 1:23), and there, in that corporate man, there cannot be Greek and Jew. Note the words. It does not say, where Greek and Jew come together in blessed fellowship. No, you have not got nationalities in the Church; you have got rid of all nationalities, and you have now one spiritual new man, a new creation, where there cannot be Greek, Jew, bondman, freeman.

In that Church there is one new man not a combination where Anglicans, Wesleyans, Baptists, Congregationalists and all the rest come together and sink their differences for the time being; that is not the Church. In the Church these differences are not merely covered up for the time being; they do not exist; there is one Body, one Spirit. The Church is this, "*Christ is all, and in all*".

23 APR - The Romance of Going All the Way

Do we want a little bit of the world? Do we still voluntarily cling to this thing and that thing outside the Lord, because the Lord Jesus has not wholly satisfied us and we must have a make-weight? A worldly Christian is a contradiction in title. To have a little bit of something outside Christ is to deny Calvary and to stand right in opposition to the eternal intention of God concerning Christ. Will you take that responsibility? God determined this from all eternity concerning His Son; and can we profess to belong to the Lord Jesus and yet at the same time it is not true that He is all, and in all to us? If so, there is something wrong, there is a denial, a contradiction. We are opposed to God's thought and purpose. Is it true that He is all, and in all? He will be that if we will go all the way.

Oh! those subtle suggestions that are ever being whispered in our ears, that if we give up this and that we are going to lose, and life is going to be poorer, and we are going to be narrowed down until we have nothing left. It is a lie! That is the thing that is countering God's great thought for us. God's thought for us is that one, no less than His Son, Jesus Christ, in Whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form, should be our fulness. All the fulness of God in Christ for us! This flesh loves to sport itself in Christian work, and tells us that if we are going to be dependent upon the Lord we are going to have an anxious time. But a life of dependence upon God can be a life of continual romance. It is there that we make discoveries which are a constant wonder.

You may be nearly dead one minute and in the next the Lord gives you something to do and you are very much alive, dependent upon Him for every breath you breathe. But thus you come to know the Lord. Then after that experience you are just as helpless and dead again for a while, but you remember that the Lord did something. Then He does it again; and so life becomes a romance; yet no one would ever guess you were depending on the Lord for your very breath. It is a very blessed thing to know the Lord is doing it, when you could not do it at all; it is, humanly, naturally, impossible, but the Lord is doing it!

24 APR - Bringing Christ Into Our Lives

Remember that everything in relation to the Christian is experimental. Everything in relation to the Lord Jesus is essentially experimental. It is not only doctrinal. This is not a matter of creed. It is not that we accept certain statements of doctrine or creed, and by that fact alone are brought into relationship to the Lord Jesus. We are not made Christians by the acceptance of doctrinal statements or orthodox creeds, or things about the Lord Jesus. The Church is not constituted on that ground at all, though the Church stands for certain things. Experience has to be wrought in the life and you have to become a part of it and it has to become a part of you. It is not sufficient to believe that Christ died on the Cross. That has got to come down here into our lives and become an experience, a mighty, operating force and factor in our beings.

The Church is that in which the truth has been wrought, in which it has been made experimental. Creeds cannot hold you together when hell rises to split you. No, the most ultra-fundamental creed has not succeeded in holding people together. The unity of the Spirit is a thing inwrought. Unless that is so there is nothing that can stand against the divisive, schismatic spirits that are abroad. Everything must be experimental, not merely doctrinal, not credal. Now that is where you get to God's reality. It is one thing to sing hymns about Christ being all, and in all, to look at it as an objective thing and agree with it; but it is another thing to be brought experimentally to the place where the truth actually works. We have to come to it through experience. May the Lord give us grace for that.

The final appeal I make is that we all should seek anew the enthronement of the Lord Jesus as supreme Lord in our hearts, in every part of our life, in all our relationships; that if there is anything we have been holding back, we should let go; if we have had any reserves, we should break now; if we have been less than wholly committed to Him, from now this should be no more, but He should be all, and in all, from this time. That should be our understanding, our undertaking with the Lord. Will you do it? Ask the Lord to break even every tender tie that is in the way of His being all, and in all. Are we prepared for that? The Lord give us grace.

25 APR - Features of the True Church

The Father appointed all things for His Son. Those 'all things' were to be the joint inheritance of His Son and His Son's bride, the Church. That comes out very clearly in the New Testament (Eph. 5:25-27). That bride was in the race of mankind, created as we are told in the book of Genesis. That bride would have to be of a certain order, a certain character, a certain kind, to be suitable to that Son. She would have to be a very special bride, she would have to be made for Him most suitable.

Then we have the story of Adam and Eve, and we know what happened through their surrender to Satan. Something spiritual happened in them, a change took place in their very nature. God had made them, firstly, for union with Himself; then for communion with Himself; and then for likeness to Himself; and in dependence upon Himself; leading to the last thing, absolute and implicit faith in Him. Those are the five things which characterize the Church according to God's mind:

- (1) union with God, vital union, the union of one life;
- (2) communion with God, intercourse, fellowship, oneness of mind;
- (3) likeness to God, in His own image and after His likeness, taking character from Him, He giving His character and His nature to the Church; then
- (4) dependence upon Him so complete that there is no life apart from Him. (It is one of the great tests of marriage union and I should say, taking it from a man's standpoint, a most difficult one for a wife to be absolutely dependent upon a man for every penny. There is a revolt against that in our times: but God meant it to be like that with His Church just absolute dependence, having nothing apart from Him, drawing everything from Him.)
- (5) perfect faith in Him.

Those five things must characterize the bride of Christ.

26 APR - Christ Loved the Church

When Adam and Eve followed Satan's counsel, their union with the Lord was broken; it brought an end to the communion; it marred the likeness and made impossible its full expression; independence came in for theirs was an independent act: Satan had tempted them to act on their own, without any relationship to God at all and that all meant that faith in God was destroyed. It was something that happened in the nature. It was not just an act, but something that entered into their very nature; and so that is how we find the race.

The Lord lays His hand upon those who are to form the bride of Christ. He brings them to the place where they have to make this decision and take this position 'I die to all that which happened long, long ago; I die to broken union, to interrupted communion, to spoiled likeness, to all independence and unbelief. I repudiate it, I put it all away; I say that belongs to a creation which I hate, and I want that to be done with, dead and buried. In Christ union is restored, communion begins again, the likeness, conformity to the Son, is taken up by the Holy Spirit; I am from this time utterly and wholly dependent upon the Lord, not to live unto myself but henceforth *"unto him who for their sakes died and rose again"* (2 Cor. 5:15), and henceforth my faith is in Him.'

"Christ loved the church," and He gave Himself, for one thing, to purchase her; for the other thing, to effect that death of herself, on her behalf. We cannot kill ourselves, but the Lord Jesus has done it for us. He has died to all that other condition for us, and has risen to all this thought of God for us. So that in His death we died to all that happened in Eden, and in His resurrection we rise to all that God ever intended that bride to be. *"Christ... loved the church, and gave himself up for it... that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."*

That brings us to this further stage, that we are together as the Church, as the bride, on resurrection ground, and ours is no longer an independent life, even as Christians.

27 APR - Christ In Heaven and Christ Within

We feel the importance of saying a word with regard to Christ in heaven and Christ within the believer, that is, what is objective and what is subjective. It is tremendously important that we should keep a proper balance of truth. A very great deal of our trouble is because of there being an unbalanced emphasis upon some aspect of truth. It is good to know the truth, and it is good to rejoice in it, but it is just possible that even truth may get us into trouble. There are many perils lying in the direction of truth, even spiritual truth; and there are not a few of the Lord's people who have fallen into those perils. It is not that they suffer from want of light, but they are suffering very much because they have not got their light properly adjusted and balanced.

Preponderance on any one side will always lead to spiritual injury, and very often to disaster. The history of many instrumentalities which have been raised up and used by the Lord is eventually the sad story of a loss of power and effectiveness because of striking an unbalanced emphasis, of putting some side of truth in a place out of proportion to that which is complementary to it.

It is not just a matter of being all-round, that is, of having everything and being in everything; but in the constitution of a body we find that one law is balanced by another. All the laws, of course, are necessary, and it is important to give due place to every function in our bodies; but there run parallel laws and functions, one balances the other. There is that which is complementary to something else. These two things are, as it were, twins, running together, and to over-emphasize or over-develop one means to throw the whole order out, and to bring about quite serious limitation and weakness, and to make things far less effective than they should be.

So it is in spiritual matters. There are always balancing truths. There is one thing, but there is something which goes with it, and which keeps it in its right measure, and causes it to fulfil its purpose and to serve its end most effectively. There is this order in the Divine creation one thing is necessary to another to make that other fulfil its purpose to the full. That is where balance has to be observed and maintained.

28 APR - The Objective Side of Salvation

We know that He is there in heaven, and we know that a very great deal is said in the Word about His being there; but why is He there? In the first place: How did He get there? Now you will notice if you look into the Word that whenever the heavenly side of the ascension of the Lord Jesus is presented, that is, whenever the matter is looked at from above, it does not speak about His going up or His ascension, but it speaks about His being received up. In the first chapter of the Book of the Acts it is recorded that as the disciples were looking up into heaven after the Lord Jesus had been taken up from among them, two angels appeared and said to them: "*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, Who was received up...*" (The Authorized Version says "*taken up*"). That is an angelic, or a heavenly, standpoint, and the word "received" represents something more than just the fact that He ascended to heaven. It carries with it this fact, that it would be impossible for the Lord Jesus to be received in heaven if He had not perfectly accomplished the work which He came from heaven to do. But it was because He had perfected the work which He came to do, and there was nothing more to be added to it, that heaven received Him, and it was a great reception!

Psalms 24 gives us some idea of what that reception was: "*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory will come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.*" You see, it implies the work that He has done by His Cross, in overthrowing all His and our enemies, meeting all the demand of human need in the matter of salvation, perfecting our salvation. And so He is received up, and is at the right hand of God; and the right hand is always in Scripture the place of strength and honour. He is at the right hand of God because the work which He came to do was finished. That is, our salvation has been perfected by and in the Lord Jesus. There is nothing whatever for Him to add to it. That is the most elementary thing to say, and yet it is so foundational. So many of the Lord's people have not yet entered into the joyful appreciation of that that the Lord Jesus really has given the last stroke and the last touch to our salvation; that when heaven received Him, heaven set its seal to the perfected work of His Cross; and that He is there in possession of a salvation which has not still to be accomplished but which is final, full, complete, utter.

29 APR - Perfect Salvation Comes with Believing

In the day in which we believe in the Lord Jesus on the ground of the perfection of the work of His Cross, we receive perfection of salvation, and enter into all that salvation to its very last degree. We shall never, though we were to live for centuries on this earth, we shall never in Christ be one little bit more perfect than we are in Him in the very moment that we believe. All that is made good to us in the day that we believe. There are no questions, no hazards, no risks, the thing is settled, it is ours; full and complete in Christ. The Blood of the Lord Jesus has dealt with the whole sin question, root and branch, once and for all, for us. The question of condemnation has been forever settled. You cannot have anything more utter than this NO condemnation! "*There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.*" It does not say: 'There is no condemnation to those who have faithfully been going on with the Lord for years'. It says: "*to them that are in Christ Jesus.*" And when are you in Christ? You are in Christ the moment that you believe in relation to His work on the Cross for your salvation, and in that very moment you enter into the place of NO CONDEMNATION, and freedom from condemnation cannot be more complete than that.

The tremendously important thing is for us to have that settled in our own hearts. We are saved, we are forgiven, we are delivered from condemnation. In Christ we are perfect. He is our perfection, and that perfection of His is ours through faith. The people who have the purest, clearest, fullest heart-grasp of that are the happiest people, the people who know joy. The people who have not grasped that are disturbed people, they have not the fullness of joy, they are always afraid, anxious, worrying about their salvation, doubting; and the enemy plays many tricks with people who have not settled that once and for all.

Now that is the blessed truth of what is objective in salvation for the believer as in Christ. That salvation of ours in its perfection has been put beyond the reach of anything that can throw a doubt upon it, or raise a question about it beyond the touch of anything that can bring it into uncertainty.

30 APR - The Perils of the Objective Apprehension

1. *The Peril of Shallowness.* What Christ has done for us may be a matter of very great joy and rejoicing and satisfaction; but contentment in that realm and with that side alone may just prevent that deep work which is necessary, which comes by the complementary side of the truth of Christ's work, the subjective.

2. *The Peril of Delayed Maturity.* Closely related to this is the peril of making the Christian life static, settled, where it has reached the point of accepting all the objective truth by faith and staying there, and not going on beyond that in spiritual experience.

3. *The Peril of Contradiction.* Their attitude says in effect, "I am saved, it does not matter what I do, I shall never be lost." Their very certainty of salvation opens the door for inconsistencies and contradictions in their lives which never reach their conscience, simply because they say they have no more conscience of sin.

4. *The Peril of Truth Taking the Place of Life.* Progress, of course, is recognized as necessary. No true believer would sit down and say, "Well, now there is no more progress to be made." But for many who have so strongly taken up the position upon the objective work of the Lord Jesus in its perfection, the matter of progress is not a matter of life, it is rather a matter of truth; that is, to know more rather than to become more.

5. *The Peril of Missing The Prize.* Salvation never was a prize. You can never win or earn salvation; it is a free gift. But to settle down with salvation in its fullness and its finality means for a great many a failure to recognize that there is a prize that of which the Apostle Paul spoke when he said: "*I press on towards the goal unto the prize of the upward calling...*" (Phil. 3:14). Paul was never in fear of losing his salvation. When he said: "*Lest... after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected*" (I Cor. 9:27), he was not thinking of losing his salvation, but he was aware that there was something that he could miss; he could fall short of something, that which he called "*the prize*"; and he related to its attainment a growth in his spiritual life: "*Not that I... am already made perfect.*"

MAY

1 MAY - The Outworking of Salvation

If the Lord were to get to work to empty us of ourselves in order to make room for the Lord Jesus, the devil would begin to say: "You are under condemnation, God is against you, these very dealings of God with you are proofs that your salvation is not certain." And so it is with a great many in whom the Lord begins to work out things. They allow the enemy to jump in and take hold of the very work of God and turn it against God, by bringing up doubts in their hearts as to their salvation.

Do you see that? So often that is done, and the peril is there, running right alongside of the greatest blessing all the time. It is thus that the enemy tries to use God's truth against God. Now the subjective side of God's work demands for its effective outworking that we are settled once and for all as to our salvation; that comes first! If you have only the one side; the objective, and all your emphasis is upon that, you may be shallow and you may not grow spiritually. If you dwell only on the subjective, you become introspective and begin to doubt your salvation; your eyes are always turned in upon yourself, and the result is that you begin to look for something in yourself that can commend itself to God; and therein lies a denial of the perfect work of salvation accomplished by the Lord Jesus.

You see it is an undermining and undercutting of the whole of the work of Calvary. These two things must go together. On the one hand fully and finally in Christ we are as perfect in the hour when we believe as ever we shall be. On the other hand all that is in Christ is going to be made, not THEORETICALLY true, but ACTUALLY true in us by the Holy Spirit. But the second demands the first, and we must keep the balance. We must rejoice always in the fact that our names are written in heaven, that we are saved with a perfect salvation; but, on the other hand, we must remember that there is something that the Lord wants to do not to make salvation true, but to make the image of Christ an inward thing. That is the outworking of salvation.

So this balance is necessary, and we must give equal emphasis. It is a matter of the work of God in Christ, and the purpose of God in Christ: and these two things must both have their place.

2 MAY - Only what is of Christ is of Value

Sometimes we have to ask ourselves, as we see personal desires being followed out, likes being served, preferences being manipulated, and it becomes so patent that there is something which is quite natural ruling decisions and making the plans: Where is the Cross, and where is the Holy Spirit working by the Cross? Therefore, you and I need to ask the Lord more every day to make these crises acute, that we shall have no blind spots on this matter, thinking that it is for the Lord when it is really for ourselves. Any measure of that 'I' is countering God's end, and anything that is done, even though it be by a most devoted soul, for the Lord on that basis is bound to have in it that element which will limit its ETERNAL value.

The thing which is going to be wholly, utterly abiding, eternal, must be utterly Christ. It may, therefore, be necessary for a course of reduction to be followed by the Lord. The thing may seem small and it may seem to be very limited according to the world's standards. What is going on can hardly be seen on the surface, but God is working right down at the bottom to build from the foundation, slowly, steadily, surely, and every fresh fragment that God adds to that work is sifted, purged, tested. It is as though God puts in something and then, before He adds to it, He tests it, proves it, tries it, sifts it, until the thing is, in its absolute purity, all of Christ and is established.

That seems to be God's way with something that is going to be wholly of Christ. You can have, if you MUST, to gratify the old human desires to SEE, to POSSESS, to KNOW, to DO, to be active, something bigger. But when you look on toward the end, it will just be tested as to what is of Christ. All the other is waste. You have plenty of Scripture to bear that out. I am only putting my finger upon a central law. Is it not true that God has determined to have nothing in this universe eventually but what is Christ, and all else will be removed forever?

It is a glorious prospect to know that the universe will be filled with Christ, and God is going to have His end. When the Lord gets hold of a life utterly, and when the Cross has really entered into that life, so that that life can say: "*I have been crucified with Christ*", nothing passes, nothing gets through that is not Christ.

3 MAY - The Challenge of Christ In Us

"I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me"(Galatians 2:20).

Are our hearts set upon God having that which is wholly of Himself? That means 'I crucified! No longer I, but Christ! And that means that Christ in us is the basis of our conformity to His image, until we partake with Him of His own nature pure gold. It is something to face seriously before Him. It brings to us a challenge, but surely it also brings to us a glorious possibility! What Christ is can be made good in us!

This is what God is doing in the groaning creation. It does not appear to be so, for, to all appearances the 'fullness' seems to be evil. Do you remember a very illuminating phrase in Genesis 15:16: "*The iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full*"? The context shows that Israel's exodus and occupation of the Promised Land waited upon the Amorite's full cup of iniquity. "Amorite" is a representative name for all the nations then occupying the land. When that cup of iniquity was full God emancipated Israel. The exodus synchronized with a condition in the world. The filling of the land with what was of God required the enemy's extension of his evil nature to its limit; then God acted.

The end time will be marked by 'iniquity abounding'. The rapture of the Church will take place as its exodus when "the man of sin is revealed", when the cup of iniquity is full. We are living at a time when there is a positive landslide of moral iniquity. It is called 'the new morality', but it is not morality at all, it is 'non morality'.

If this is true of such a fragment of the world, what of the whole world situation? God is taking account of this. He is causing the simple facts of His salvation to be made known on a scale unprecedented in the world's history, and when the whole world has had its opportunity "then shall the end come".

4 MAY - Christ Our Life

"When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested..." (Colossians 3:4)

One of the main objects of the Holy Spirit is to get believers really identified with Christ as the risen and exalted Lord, and to make His risen life real in their experience. As the age moves toward its consummation the manifestation of Christ two features will become increasingly evident. On the one hand things, men, movements, institutions, organizations, etc., will predominate and draw multitudes after them, and will attach the crowds to themselves. On the other hand, with a growing disappointment and disillusionment over these, a minority will turn to the Lord Himself to find Him alone as their life.

Three elements will inhere in all this. One is the unmistakable development of the principle of Anti-christ; that which will definitely supplant Christ, or intend to do so. The second is the alternative to the whole Christ in man-made Christianity, an imitation life born and carried on by its own momentum. The third, a deep and genuine quest for reality, truth, and inward knowledge of the Lord Himself. In the first case it will be naked worship of man in human power: a tremendous overflow of humanism, the wonder and glory of man. The third will be Christ altogether as the life.

If the Christian is attached to some thing, such as a teaching, a tradition, an institution, a movement, or person, the end will certainly be a limitation of life and eventually confusion and disappointment, perhaps worse. The New Testament makes it unmistakably clear and emphatic that the destiny of all is to be *"Christ all and in all."* We must learn that a true work of the Spirit of God is to attach everything to Christ Himself. He, Christ, must be the life of our spirit, the *"inner man,"* so that we are strong in the Lord: not in ourselves, nor in others, nor in things. We shall have to survive adversity by His strength within alone.

Christ will need to be life for our bodies. There is such a thing as Divine life for the physical body. Not always does the Lord choose to heal the body, but He does always want to be its life, even in suffering, to fulfill His purpose.

5 MAY - God's End-Time Work - Everything Essentially Spiritual

What is the service of God at an end-time? The particular work of God at an end-time is, to begin with, the constituting of a new and spiritually inclusive dispensation, a new age of an essentially and wholly spiritual kind. In Heb. 12:27 we have, *"And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain."* That word 'removing' really means the transferring or the transposing on to another and different basis. The fact that that comes at the end of the letter to the Hebrews is significant, for that letter is just full of that earthly system of Judaism with all its forms, its ritual, its make-up and constitution. All that is earthly, even in relation to God, is going to be removed, and everything is going to be transferred to another basis a spiritual, a heavenly basis; and when things begin to happen on the ground of an end-time, that is the character of what is taking place.

The earthly is now going to be forced to give way to the heavenly, the temporal to the spiritual, the outward to the inward. Then it will be proved just how much we have that can be transferred, for there are many things that are not going to be transferred. *"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Cor. 15:50). That signifies and implies that there is a whole order of creation which is not going to constitute that eternal order; it is to pass away. Everything is going to be transferred to another basis, and this kind of thing intensifies at an end-time.

What God will see to, by sheer force of conditions, is that anything that is only temporal will go and that which is spiritual alone will remain. There must therefore be intensifying processes to bring out the spiritual. Is not that where we are? The Lord seems to be concentrating upon bringing out spiritual values, making spiritual men and women, and if I am not mistaken, we are going to see, and are already seeing, the removal of so much, the external things, upon which Christians have been relying as though these things constituted their Christian life. We are going to be forced back to the place where the one question that faces us is, After all, what have I got of the Lord Himself? Not, What can I do, where can I go? but, What have I got? Now is the test. What have I got in my hands?

6 MAY - The Challenge of His Presence

We should realize that many times when we are being provoked, upset, annoyed, and do not know why, the reason is that the Spirit of Jesus Christ is at work upon us because we are out of harmony with our Lord. In such a case we can take one of two attitudes, either get right, or go from bad to worse and become more and more bitter, even against the Lord.

Jesus is a sign spoken against; it implies something, and the effect of this implication is to provoke. Should you begin to see what Jesus means, there will be some reaction; and if you are not prepared to accept the implication of Jesus Christ you will be strongly provoked. You will not remain neutral, you will begin to fight. That is where Saul of Tarsus was. Deeper down than all else, he was fighting against the Lord, kicking against the goad. That was the innermost meaning of it. He was provoked by the significance of Jesus, the significance of Christ Himself. In the person of Christ you have a different kind of man, no mere earthly man, but a heavenly Man. Here is a Man embodying in His own person a holy, heavenly standard, the standard of heaven, and men are being measured and weighed by heavenly standards in the presence of the Lord Jesus: not only by what He says, and the judgments that He verbally passes, but by His presence. They are discovering that here is a standard that finds out their smallness, their lack, and their difference. You know that is very true.

When a true child of God, indwelt by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, goes into a business house to work or into some ungodly home, it often happens that, without their saying anything about their being a Christian, a strain begins to be felt, and people begin to be nasty or pass remarks. Something in the very atmosphere is stirred up and provoked by the presence of Christ in the believer. Even a true, humble, loving child of God finds that something is provoked, and he or she becomes a marked person and known to be different. People begin to feel uncomfortable. If that is true of some simple child of God, how much more true it must have been of the very Son of God Himself. His presence was the standard measure of heaven. Men could not measure up to it, and they felt all wrong and uncomfortable in His presence. He was a sign. There was a significance about Him, about His very presence, which was spoken against: it provoked.

7 MAY - Are You a Sign Spoken Against?

The presence of the Lord Jesus brings in the heavenly standard, the heavenly laws, the heavenly system, and it is not easy for anyone unless you are on the side of heaven. Jesus was the sign which was spoken against. They could not get Him to conform to the customary thing, because He was not going to be a party to their falsehood, their hypocrisy, their formality, to their unspiritual condition which lay back of their outward ritual; and therefore He was a provocation; and He is always like that. He will find out whether we are governed more by policy than by principle, whether temporal interests concern us more than eternal considerations.

When He said to His brethren, after being urged by them to go up to the feast, "*Go ye up unto the feast: I go not up unto this feast.*" "*But when his brethren were gone up unto the feast, then went he also up, not publicly, but as it were in secret*" (John 7:8-10). It looks a little difficult, does it not? as though He is involved in some duplicity. But what does it mean? It was the feast of tabernacles and it celebrated the consummation of the emancipation from Egypt and the entrance into the kingdom of God, the deliverance from this present evil world and translation into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. That kingdom was embodied in Christ Himself, not in Jerusalem, nor now in any earthly celebrations of historic feasts. He is the kingdom of God, therefore He does not make it a matter of mere occasional celebration in an external way like that. The celebration was empty, false. Thus in no way would He allow it to be thought that He was in that. He was apart from it, and if He did go up "*not publicly but as it were in secret*" it was because He went to try to get people out of the false representation of heavenly things, to bring them to Himself as the embodiment of the heavenly thought of God about the feast of tabernacles.

He was a provocation because in His own behaviour He signified something of another, a heavenly, order. It is ever so. Where the Lord's children are living by heavenly principles, what provocation it arouses, what speaking against! You cannot be a heavenly child of God and not be spoken against. Do not try to escape being spoken against. You signify something, and everything of this world is against that something.

8 MAY - The Break Up of All That Is In Man

The apostle Paul and his companions who can be said to represent the church went by ship, and that to my mind represents all such manmade means employed by God for the reaching of His ends, to Rome.

On the way while on the one side there seemed to be so much that was working in opposition and reverse and contradiction, on the other side it was a case of the stripping off of all the works of men. The ship did go to pieces, the man-made thing employed by the sovereignty of God to reach His ends. It was thrown away when His ends were in the way of realization.

There are a lot of things made by men, and godly men at that, which the Lord makes use of, but they will go, e.g. places of meeting, institutions, societies, organisations: they are made by men, they are useful, they help toward God's end, but like the ship, they are but means to the end. You must not put all your faith in the ship; you must not ascribe final values to the place, the means, the instrument. We shall find that the Lord has not committed Himself to keep the means intact, to hold the instrument for eternity.

It is His Church that He is after, which He is preserving, which is to come out alive; and on the way, the 'things' will have to go, they will have to be broken up, they cannot meet the full impact of the forces of evil in this terrific storm. The forces of evil are too much for anything made by man, but they are not the equal of what God has made: His Church will come out all right.

Be careful that you do not put too much upon God's means, God's instrument, the ship. Keep your eye on God's real object. The framework of things may break up, but God's spiritual values will be eternally preserved. And let us not worry too much if God sees the time has come for the stripping off of things. They may have served a very good purpose and our hearts may be very much linked with them, with that place or that instrumentality; but if the Lord begins to break it up and take it from us, do not think everything of value is going. No, it is the spiritual values upon which our hearts must be set.

9 MAY - God Rules the Unseen and Overrules the Seen

The Church does not proceed, even toward Divinely-fixed and appointed ends, by a protected course. Even with the Lord's end in view, we do not go by a way that is completely immune either from our weaknesses or from difficulties and adversities, and things which seem to upset completely all our plans. Our whole course will always be that of Divine overruling: not only ruling as in the unseen, but overruling in the seen. You must ever remember that those two things go hand in hand. God is ruling in the unseen: He is overruling in the seen. In the course there will always be plenty of room for an argument as to misadventure, calamity, defeat, tragedy, giving rise to regret, doubt and even condemnation. If we are so disposed, we can say, 'Oh, this is a calamity, this is defeat! This is due to my mistake, and everything is wrecked!'

Had Paul been of another kind, like some of us, he would have said, 'I wish I had not appealed to Caesar (Acts 26:32)! See what trouble I have got myself into (shipwreck)! I am going to the bottom of the sea, and all my work is finished!' There is always room for that if we are so disposed, and thus to get under condemnation because we have made mistakes. The Lord has never so acted with His people that there was no room for anything like that. If we want to doubt, we shall have plenty of occasion for doubting. If we want to speak of tragedy, we shall have plenty of tragic experience. If we are disposed to get under condemnation, there will be plenty to take on.

The way to God's end is not a way free from these elements or from the possibility of so interpreting things. It will be that, in all and through all, God overrules, and at last we shall be able to exclaim, as Paul did, "*and so we came to Rome*" (Acts 28:14); the end reached through so much. What is the end in view? It is not just to journey to see this temporal Rome. The end which looms up out of that visit is the great calling and destiny of the Church in union with Christ who in all things has the pre-eminence. That is the sum of the letters to the Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians the pre-eminence of Christ, and the Church united with Him therein. That is the end of the journey; that is what is in view beyond.

10 MAY - “One Thing I Do” Not “One Thing I Hope To Do”!

The Lord is eventually triumphant in His Church. Paul’s journey to Rome represents that truth. He writes, *“And so we came to Rome”* (Acts 28:14). How much is packed into that little word *“so”*! It was something given into his heart by the Lord, something around which all kinds of expectations and imaginations were woven, all of which were entirely disappointed, undone, brought to disintegration and changed; but the purpose of God stood. That which God had put into the heart went through and was found at last to be not of man but of God.

I wonder what Paul felt like as he entered Rome; remembering when long ago the thing came into his heart, and all his visions and expectations and hope, and all his thoughts of going beyond Rome to Spain and now this is how things have worked out! And so it is with us: not as we thought, not as we expected and planned, but we are here! That is the thing that matters; we are here!

We can transfer that to the large issue of the course of the child of God as well as of the Church. How many times have we looked at the storm, looked at situations, looked at our own faults and mistakes, at what the enemy has called our blunders, and have said, ‘Oh, it is hopeless, we shall never get there!’ And yet despite all that has happened, we are still going on, even though we cannot yet say that we have arrived. It will be like that if our hearts are as knit to the Lord and His eternal purpose as was that of this dear man Paul. When we get to heaven, we shall say, ‘And so we came to heaven! Here we are!’ We shall look at one another and say, ‘Well, brother, you did not think you were going to be here, but here you are!’ Believe me, that is God’s sovereign part; and if any responsibility on our part comes in at all, it is that we should be of the spirit of this man who said, *“One thing I do”* (Phil. 3:13) not, ‘I hope to do’, or, ‘I am going to do when my present phase of life is passed, when my college years are finished’; not ‘tomorrow’, not ‘presently’, not ‘when I am trained’. No, *“One thing I do”*; I am doing it now. If we are like that, we can count on this sovereignty of God, which may upset our plans and change our expectations; but we shall be there, and heaven will triumph in getting us there.

11 MAY - A Right Apprehension of the Blood

Oh! If the Lord's people could get this in their hearts. There are so many of the Lord's people today over whom Satan is lording it; lording it along the line of accusation, bringing them under a sense of condemnation and judgment, robbing them of their peace, of their assurance, rest, hope; and you will find these people are everlastingly talking about their own short-comings, their sinfulness; they are for ever circling round themselves, all that they are that they would not be, all that they are not that they would be. Their deliverance from Satan is that they should have a fresh apprehension of the absolute satisfaction of the Father in His Son on their behalf, and that they find their standing before the Father in acceptance. That is the way of deliverance, the way of the Adversary's casting out. This is the way of overcoming him as the Accuser. Yes, the ground of the Blood is sufficient for this full-orbed, many-sided, all-round victory. *"They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb,"* and the first and supreme factor in the virtue of that Blood in all these directions, is its untainted sinlessness, the nature of the Lord Jesus. There has never been another who was such.

Oh, I am so glad that it was God that came in Christ. We receive by faith the virtue of that precious Blood; that is, the perfection of the Lord Jesus can be put to our account. That is grace the wonder of the Gospel. If we were to begin to analyse ourselves and take stock of ourselves, that would be a terrible business, a wretched business, and it would be endless think of it, beloved, with all that we know of ourselves, all that God knows about us *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart. I try the reins..."*

I am not saying that any of us ever becomes sinlessly perfect in ourselves here, but those perfections of the Lord Jesus are put to our account before God to satisfy His requirements, to provide the ground where Satan no longer has authority. The defeat of Satan and the victory of the saints is not by their effort, their straining, their groaning, nor by anything they can do; it is the measure of their faith's appropriation of the absolute perfection of Christ for them as a living, working thing of God on their behalf. It is a great thing to be in Christ Jesus.

12 MAY - The Blood Speaks of Total Separation to God

The Blood speaks of that, beloved, absolute separation unto God. Go back to the Old Testament for illustration. In the Book of Joshua, chapter 5, you have the people coming to Gilgal where the Lord, through Joshua, ordered the complete circumcising of Israel. All the males that had been born in the wilderness were circumcised at Gilgal and the Lord's word was this: *"This day (when it was done) have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt... wherefore the name of that place was called Gilgal,"* which is *"rolling."* *"The Lord hath rolled away the reproach of Egypt"* on the day of the circumcising, in the day of that symbolic act in the shedding and encircling of the precious Blood the whole body of the flesh cut off so Paul explains it in Col. 2, *"the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ."* The reproach of Egypt rolls away when that happens. What is *"the reproach of Egypt"*? What is the meaning of that? I wonder if you have noticed the persistent following of Egypt on the heels of Israel all the days of the wilderness. I do not mean literally, I mean spiritually. They were constantly looking back to Egypt. *"Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?"* Even when Moses went up into the mount and Aaron made the calf and they danced to the calf and worshipped it, it was Egypt brought out in representation. What is it that Stephen tells us about it I think he sums it all up in a word in Acts 7:39: *"... and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt."*

Their hearts were in Egypt, and it was because their hearts were more than half in Egypt all the forty years, that there is such a sorry story; up and down; one day brighter, and the next day murmuring and complaining again. What a story it is. Whenever, you read the account it seems that the bright patches are almost overlooked and the dark thing is kept in view. It is referred to in the New Testament. Paul writes to the Hebrews about it their *"carcasses fell in the wilderness,"* reminding them of the day of provocation in the wilderness when *"your fathers tempted me..."*; always coming back to this wretched failure. Why did they fail? Because their hearts were not wholly out of Egypt; because they had not recognized sufficiently nor apprehended adequately the meaning of the type of that precious Blood of the Lamb that was slain.

13 MAY - Utterly In or Partly In?

Now, beloved, the trouble with a good many of us has been this divided heart. We are not sure, not absolutely sure about the Lord, about our own position, about the testimony that we are perhaps standing for and talking about; we are not sure about it, we have secret questionings. It does not matter what we say in public and to others about it, God knows the secret of our hearts, whether we are absolutely true in secret with Him over this matter; and there is no way of victory, no way to ascendancy, no way through to the realization of the Divine end a people to fulfil a priestly ministry in the universal sovereignty and kingdom of our God and His Christ until we are on the ground of an absolute undividedness of heart for God in the matter of His testimony.

The challenge to our hearts is, Are we utterly in or are we only partly in; half in; three-quarters in? Is there some lurking fascination of Egypt? How Egypt had fascinated and held part of their hearts when they were in the wilderness! Out here everything is uncertain; we never know from one day to another whether we are going to have our food! In Egypt there was at least certainty; we did know what our program was; we were sure that things would be pretty substantial, that while we had our work we got our food! Out here you are forced to depend upon God, and that is a precarious business. Is it? God is more certain than Egypt. There are Christians who feel that this walk of faith is such an uncertain thing. You do not know what the Lord is going to bring you into next, what is going to happen to you. In the world you at least have solid ground under your feet. This flesh wants a basis of evidence for itself; solid earth. This heavenly life you never know - ah! But do you know the Heavenly ONE?

Let me ask you Do you believe, beloved, that when, having committed yourself to God, having been consecrated to the Lord, having had an understanding with the Lord, and having been obedient to Him up to all the light He has given you, do you believe that when you get to the glory you will be able to say to the Lord: You let me be deceived, my life has been ruined, I have gone wrong? Is that possible? I do not believe it! The Lord will accept a charge on His honour when we are cut off from ourselves and from all personal and worldly interests, and are wholly for Him.

14 MAY - We Shall Never Have To Let Go What He Let Go

Egypt for some is the ground of bondage and defeat. Even though we may be the Lord's children, may be Blood-bought, may have come out on redemption ground, yet we may be defeated because of an inadequate apprehension of the meaning of that precious Blood. I believe that there will be many who will lose that thing that God has in view as a special vocation in His heavenly kingdom, because they are not wholly devoted to God now. I do not believe that we will be brought into that willy-nilly.

If you want the world, even as a believer, want a little of it well, you may have it at this cost, the loss of that for which God has preeminently called you, the heavenly kingdom in a marvellous vocation, you will lose that. Paul was after that. Paul strained every nerve, spiritually, for that; left the things which were behind for that, to be preserved unto His heavenly kingdom. There are many Christians who will lose that because they do not go all the way with the Lord; not lose their salvation, but that specific vocation in glory and honour; they will lose it because they did not recognize and honour the full virtue of the Blood in the totality of their consecration and abandonment to the Lord. Yes, in that sense they will be left behind. But those who go through, who overcome in trial, are they that overcome because of the Blood of the Lamb in this second meaning, the absolute abandonment of the Lord Jesus to the will of His Father even unto death; who are standing in the virtue of His consecration, and making their consecration, by His grace, as utter as was His. We shall never have to let go what He let go in His obedience to the will of God. We have not got it to let go, but what the Lord is looking for, beloved, is a people who are with Him completely, with undivided heart, and that is the ground of our victory and of Satan's defeat.

Oh, let it be seen that the Blood of the Lamb in its absolute perfection of holiness and sinlessness as representing His being, His substance, His essence, His nature and His complete surrender, His capitulation to the will of His Father, is the ground to stand on; something to be appropriated by faith and held on to. More, it is something to be taken up as a weapon against the enemy.

15 MAY - The Challenge of Loving Those with Less Light

A part of the Spirit's work to build us and hold us together so that there may be a united testimony to the glory of God. God needs something more than a heap of stones even if they are living stones if He is to have a properly constructed dwelling. Christ needs more than many members, even though they are living members, since a body can only function if its members are coordinated and integrated in vital relationship. Now although there are many members there is only one anointing; we either share His anointing or we do not know its power. The anointing upon Christ is the same anointing as that which we receive, and in us as well as in Him its one purpose is to express God's glory.

It is the anointing Spirit who makes the Church to be the house of God, and the house is one because Christ is one. We must never be caught in the mistake of imagining that those who hold the truth of the one body are more in the reality of it than those who do not. We must beware of the schisms which come because of the things which we know and others do not, for light alone can easily cause divisions.

"Is Christ divided?" (1 Corinthians 1:13). That was a challenge made to the church whose members were so ready to boast of their knowledge and so partisan in their attitude to various spiritual teachers. These were the very people whom the apostle described as being a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16), and also warned very solemnly against destroying that temple. How is the temple destroyed? It is by trying to divide Christ, by making parties and groups among the Lord's people, often by wrongly imagining that they are superior to other Christians because of the teaching they have received or the teacher whom they follow. This is an offense to the Holy Spirit, and a sure way of thwarting God's desire to show forth His glory.

So it is that practical love towards any of His members opens the way for His Spirit's working and, conversely, carelessness, indifference or antagonism towards other members of Christ is a sure way of quenching the Holy Spirit. It may be that this is the explanation of there being so much less glory among God's people than there ought to be. The moment we grieve the Spirit, we begin to dim the glory.

16 MAY - Not By 'Our' Might or 'Our' Power

Although we accept the fact of Christ's eternal sonship, we are told that as Son of man He was enabled to glorify the Father by means of the anointing Spirit. From the beginning of His public testimony to its completion He offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit. As representative Man, He lived and suffered for the one purpose of glorifying God, and so perfectly fulfilled this task that in Him the testimony to the glory of God has been secured forever. So, then, our fears and sense of weakness must not cripple us, for He has sent His Spirit into our lives so that in us, too, the testimony might be maintained and the glory seen. We can claim the promise, *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit"*.

This also gives us the answer to the interrogation, *"Who hath despised the day of small things?"* (Zechariah 4:10). Out of the large numbers who went into exile, just forty-two thousand odd were ready to pay the price of letting go the comforts and security of life in Babylon to return to the land where God's testimony could be established. They were small in number, weak in themselves, despised by their neighbours, and they returned to a land which was desolate, impoverished and afflicted, so that it was indeed a *'day of small things'*. But they were not to be despised, for God was backing them up as they truly sought His glory. It is no small thing to be involved in the testimony of God's glory.

God has always been obliged to strip His instruments of their own glory. A Moses, full of Egypt's sufficiency, must go for forty years to the backside of the desert to be emptied out and made to confess his complete inadequacy before he can become an instrument for the display of the glory of God. There were times when some of the Israelites did try to despise this now humble Moses, and he made no attempt to stand up for himself, but God soon made it manifest to all concerned how wrong it was to despise him. The glory of God appeared at the gate of the tabernacle and took up the challenge. Sometimes it takes the Lord years to get us sufficiently emptied, weak and small, so that we can bear His glory in our lives, a fact which may well explain some of His dealings with us. When He has got us small enough and empty enough, then there is a chance for the working of His Spirit in glory.

17 MAY - Conforming To Christ in Common Trials

Take the place where the Lord has put you, where He has called you to live your life and do your work in all the trial and difficulty and suffering of it, and do not strain to get out of it. Do not lose the present value of it by always living mentally or hopefully in a time when you will be out of it, but go back there and recognize that if you are the Lord's, if you love God and are called according to purpose (as you are if you are in Christ), God is seeking to do something with you and in you by means of the conditions of your present situation. You will only defeat God's end if you try to get out, and fail to recognize and accept what He is seeking to do.

So we must go back to the sphere and conditions in which the Lord has placed us, with this attitude — God has a thought which relates to me as one of His Own; and that thought is, that through the conditions and sufferings of my life He should develop in me the features of His Son. On the one hand, the features of the old creation may be seen to be more and more terrible and horrible, as I recognize them in myself; but over against that God is doing something which is other than myself, not me at all. He is bringing into being Another, altogether other, and that is His Son. Slowly, all too slowly; nevertheless something is happening. That sonship is not very much manifested yet, but it is going to be manifested. What God has been doing will come out into the light eventually — conformity to the image of His Son; *"that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."*

So we look out upon the people of God on the earth amongst whom we are included, and we have to adjust our ideas as to why we are here. There may be things to do, but God is far more concerned with the being than with the doing, and we have to learn all over again what service is. Service to God is essentially spiritual, or, in other words, it is the measure in which Christ Himself is brought into God's universe for God's satisfaction; and we know that we can never bring Christ into anyone's life by preaching. We may talk to the end of our days, but all our preaching is not going to produce Him. We can only help one another in this matter to understand what God is seeking to do.

18 MAY - Only God's Spirit Can Conform Us to Christ

"The Spirit... maketh intercession... according to God."

The Spirit Who knows God, God's thoughts, God's mind, is working according to God and working in us. We have received the Spirit of sonship, adoption, by which we cry, Father! We are children of God to be manifested as the sons of God, but all this is because the Holy Spirit is operating, making intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. *"The Spirit helpeth our infirmity."* He comes alongside. He alone can reproduce Christ, conform us to His image. And yet we have thought that service was preaching, teaching, doing this or that or a hundred and one things! Oh, that is only the vehicle of the Spirit. Let us be undeceived about this matter.

The fact is this, that we may advance a long way in spiritual knowledge (I mean in information, the knowledge of the truth) beyond our own real measure, and then have the shock, under terrible conditions, of discovering that all that we have accumulated through the years does not help us. The peril then, of course, is to jettison all the teaching we have had and to say that it is a valueless thing. It is not valueless; but we must recognize that there is all the difference between knowing the thoughts of God in our minds, and the Holy Spirit's using that knowledge to accomplish God's ends. Thus we have to come back with every fragment and have very real dealings with the Lord. Our attitude every time must be, 'Lord, do save me from ever coming to the time when what I have heard proves only to have been a thing heard; make it a basis of Holy Spirit activity to reach the Divine end.'

Now, if you can grasp this, it is going to be great deliverance. Why are the people of God suffering? — that they may be conformed to the image of His Son. God is going to use all conditions to that end, and, tragically enough, there are multitudes of the Lord's people who do need a world shaking. They are so bound up with the externalities of Christianity, with its whole structure and system, that nothing but that which will overthrow, disintegrate, destroy, and raise tremendous questions about the whole business, will bring them to the place where the Spirit of God can begin really to do the work which He has come to do in them.

19 MAY - An Inwrought Knowledge of the Lord

We are all conscious how very testing are the limitations that growingly bear down upon us as those who would serve the Lord. They raise many questions and problems in our minds, so far as concerns the fulfilment of what we have thought to be our ministry. The situation is a very trying one. We have to look deeper, still more inward, as to God's thought.

This is a fact borne out in the case of every servant of God in history who has really come under the hand of God — that the real values of their lives for all time have been those which correspond to the wine of the grape, the thing trodden out in the winepress, the agony of the heart; and you know that it is true in your case that if ever you have had anything at all which you knew to be worthwhile and which has really helped someone else, it has been born out of some travail in your own experience. You have gone into the winepress, through an agony, to produce it and that is the nature of real service to God.

How do we know? — not have information, but know? We only know anything in that deepest sense by going into a situation where we are stripped of everything in order to prove that one thing, and to find in knowing it our deliverance, our salvation. That is the way in which we learn, and there is no gap whatever between that kind of knowledge and our very being. That knowledge is not objective to ourselves, it is ourselves, and when we give that we give ourselves. We cannot stand back from that and say, 'I believed that once but I do not believe it any longer; I had those ideas, but I do not hold them now.' Oh, God could never be satisfied with anything like that.

There may be sifting and adjustment as to our ideas, but the Lord is after 'true knowledge.' We stand or fall by our knowledge, because true knowledge is life, is being, and it is what God Himself is in us.

20 MAY - What Is God Doing With His People?

How do you pray for the Lord's people in times of trouble? Of course, we are all tempted to pray for their deliverance, to cry to the Lord that they may escape. It may be right at times to pray thus, but suppose the Lord does not deliver? He does not always deliver at once. He allows the situation to continue, to become long drawn out. The enemy will encamp upon that fact and give it his own twist and interpretation — 'God is not doing anything; He has left His people, is standing back, is not concerned.' There is no answering voice, no slightest indication that He is taking any account at all. It is like that very often, and that is a real playground for the enemy. God apparently makes no response.

How shall we be delivered from going to pieces, from being overwhelmed in such a time and under such conditions? Only by grasping this thought of God; and then we have to begin to pray along other lines. If God does not act to deliver His people, there is a deeper and a higher thought and purpose than their deliverance, and He is at work upon that; and deeply in them He is going to reproduce the patience, the endurance, the longsuffering of Jesus Christ.

Meekness and gentleness — these are foreign things to our natures; under stress, under adversity, under the cruel hand of tyrannical men, to say, 'Father, forgive!' He could say "*I am meek and lowly in heart.*" Oh, you see — the image of His Son. Such testing conditions are a terrible challenge to our natural dispositions. Our whole nature revolts against meekness and lowliness and wants to rise up and be even with the other one, or be the master. Our nature does not accept and delight in opposition, antagonism, frustration, persecution, and all such things.

21 MAY - What God Is Trying To Do In US

Think of the marvel of Christ in Pilate's hall and before the High Priest. Spat upon, mocked, struck, in every way degraded — and He is almighty and infinite God incarnate Who, with the parting of His lips, the silent lifting of His hand, could have smitten that crowd out of existence! The centurion was right; when he saw what had happened he was filled with fear and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God.' We have heard of people suddenly discovering their awful mistake and dying of heart failure on the spot. Think of the shock that has to come yet to those who treated Him as He was treated — when they see Him. You can understand something of what took place in Saul of Tarsus (who knew all about what had happened in Jerusalem) when he saw Him — "*I am Jesus*" — saw Him in a brightness above that of the noonday sun.

But my point is this, He accepted and endured all that, going through to the bitter end, letting them hammer nails through His hands and feet and fix Him to the Cross, with all the deriding — "*He saved others; himself he cannot save... Let (God) deliver him now, if he desireth him: for he said, I am the Son of God.*" And He did not stir a finger or utter a word when twelve legions of angels were standing ready for His aid. (If one angel could smite the host of Sennacherib, what would twelve legions do?) That is meekness and lowliness of heart, and that is what God is trying to effect in us. That is the thought of God; that is going to be glory in God's universe; that will make a world worth living in, and a universe of that nature will be bearable. God thus works in us in these words — "*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*"

22 MAY - The Need and Value of Suffering

Let it be settled with us once for all that the sufferings of Christ are an absolute necessity. I am going to say a very strong thing, and it is this - that if you know nothing about the sufferings of Christ, there is something wrong with you as a Christian. I am not, of course, speaking of such as have only just entered upon the Christian life, though suffering is sometimes encountered right from the first. But obedience and faithfulness soon lead to the experience of some form of Christ's sufferings. If you are avoiding those sufferings, if you are rebelling against them, you are taking an entirely wrong line. They are the true lot of children of God. I do not say that you will each have them in the same measure or of the same kind, but you will have them. Ask the Lord if your bad times may not, after all, fit into this. You have been thinking of them merely as circumstances, as disappointments, working out to your misfortune, your disadvantage. But wait; see whether these are not, after all, bound up with your spiritual life, whether they do not bear a relationship to your spiritual growth. Interrogate yourself, examine this question.

Sufferings are necessary for several things; first of all, to keep things real, practical and up-to-date. The Lord is not going to allow any one of us to live upon a past, upon a theory, upon a tradition, upon a doctrine as a doctrine. He will allow us to live only on what is real and practical and up-to-date, and, being made as we are, we do not so live unless we are made to. If I know even a little about the Lord and the Lord's things, I can tell you perfectly frankly it is because of suffering. I could not and would not have learned unless the Lord had made me learn, and taught me in a very deep and practical school where things were kept right up-to-date, and where every bit of ministry sprang out of some new experience. It is a law which applies to us all. The fact is that these sufferings are absolutely essential to keep things real; people have a right to ask, 'How did you get to know that? Have you proved that? How much has that been to you in the deepest hours of life, when things were beyond your power? Did that prove to be true then?' If we are not able to say with all our heart in utter sincerity, 'I found the Lord to be like that; I have put that truth to a thorough test and proved it', then we are frauds. The Lord has no place for frauds; therefore He keeps us up-to-date. Reality is by suffering.

23 MAY - Growth and Ability by Suffering

Progress and growth are also secured by sufferings. All nature declares it. Growth, development, increase, is by that expanding power which creates a creak and a groan and an ache within the organism; and in the spiritual life it is like that. We speak about growing pains. I believe that is considered to be unscientific now, but it is a very useful phrase. Yes, there are growing pains, and the sufferings of Christ in the members of His Body are related to growth. The difference is this, that in what we have called growing pains it is the growing that is actually taking place which causes the pains, while here, in what we have before us, it is the pains which produce the growth afterward. We grow by means of suffering, there is no doubt about it. Show me a mature spiritual life, and you show me the embodiment of much suffering of some kind - not always physical - a life which has gone through things. Paul found his turning point there *"that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead"*; a new discovery from the depths. Where he touched bottom, he discovered God in a new way - *"God who raiseth the dead"*. Such knowing of Him comes along that line. The values of suffering are there.

But then note what he says again *"God... who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able..."* Oh, there is a lot in that! That speaks of stock in trade, the means for service, does it not? We may often have bad times about our lack of ability in many ways, comparing ourselves with other people and deploring our lack of ability in this and that. Oh, for ability! But what is the greatest ability after all? The best and most fruitful ability is to be able to help people in the deep experiences of spiritual life; to be able to explain to them the meaning of God's dealings with them, to be able to show them what is intended to be the outcome of it all, to be able to give them some support by counsel which comes from real knowledge - some of that comfort which we ourselves have received of God. That is real service, that is building up the Body of Christ, the House of God - being really able, in a spiritual way, to strengthen the sorrowing. That comes through suffering.

24 MAY - The Suffering within the Sufferings

There are sufferings and the suffering; the plural and the singular. The suffering - that is, the suffering which is within the sufferings. Sometimes it is the suffering which brings about the sufferings. Take Paul, for instance, and the suffering to which he refers in II Corinthians 1:8-10 "*our affliction which befell us in Asia*". The word '*affliction*' there is from a Latin root which means '*a flail*', and it pictures the wielding of a flail upon the naked body of a bound man, bruising and breaking and battering; it is a strong word. Paul says that is what happened to him in Asia. "*Weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life: yea, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves...*" "We had the answer to our enquiry; the answer was "It is death!" Now, that is the suffering within the sufferings.

Do not think for a moment that that was just a physical matter. A man who could go through all those experiences which are recorded of Paul, and who could say that to depart and be with Christ was far better, was not afraid of dying. Not at all! There must have been some suffering within the sufferings. '*Weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power*': that was something inward; it was not because he was desperately ill and might die at any moment. What then is this? It may have been due to the report that came to him of conditions in Corinth, for it was at this time that he received the news of the terrible state of things in Corinth recorded in these letters, and he speaks of "*that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches*" (2 Cor. 11:28). Even if it was physical sickness that assailed him, we know that sickness in the body is very often caused by grief of heart; the outward sufferings are sometimes the result of inward distress. Thus we have the suffering within the sufferings.

25 MAY - Paul's Spiritual Suffering

Here is a spiritual suffering for Christ's sake; and that which Paul speaks of as "the sentence of death", though beyond our explanation, yet does seem to suggest that he got into a terrible state spiritually because of certain conditions. If I were to try to reshape this situation, I should say, Paul had received this terribly bad news about the state of things in the church at Corinth, with more perhaps from other directions as well, and he had gone down under his suffering and said, 'Is it worth it? Is it not all in vain? Is it not an utterly hopeless situation? Am I not wasting my life in pouring it out for such people?' When you start like that, there is no end. You can go down and down until waters of despair gradually close over you. You try to pray and you cannot, for a doubting man can never pray. He may cry, but he cannot pray. A man who has let go to that sort of thing cannot pray; heaven is closed. And Paul, so to speak, interrogates himself and says, 'What is the meaning of this?' The answer is, 'It is death; along that line it is death; if you get down there, there is no way through and no way up; that is the end of everything - death!'

My point at the moment is that death here was spiritual, not physical. He was tasting something of the real nature of death. Death is a sense of being excluded from God, of heaven being closed, of there being no way through and no way out, shut up and shut in, at the end of everything; and that registered in or upon your soul. That is more than physical death. Some of us more than once would have been glad to die physically. But this other thing is spiritual death, and it is terrible, it is awful; there is no gladness about that. To taste that is to know something of the sufferings of Christ. Those sufferings may be known along other lines, but we are not attempting here to define in detail the whole range of Christ's sufferings, but only to stress the fact of them.

26 MAY - An Inheritance of the Suffering of Christ

Little need be said, I think, as to the fact of the sufferings. We know the people of God are not exempt from sufferings. That, I think, need not be laboured. But there are many sufferings into which they enter because they are the people of God; and that, perhaps, needs a little thinking about. There are sufferings we may bring upon ourselves, sufferings which need not be, but I am not thinking about those. I am speaking about the sufferings of Christ, of the fact of these, and that they are the common lot of the people of God, and that when they come upon us, there is nothing wrong in that.

But when you think about these sufferings, with Paul as the great example and interpreter, you are led to see that these are not just incidents, local or earthly things. Even when they take legal and earthly form and colouring by reason of situations and circumstances and events, they have a far greater range than anything incidental, local, temporal, earthly. The range of these sufferings is no less than the spiritually universal. They reach out beyond ourselves, our circle, our lives, our time, and beyond anything here and now. I would use the word 'dispensational' but for its being perhaps misunderstood. Paul's sufferings comprehended the dispensation and are virtuous today after so many centuries, and have touched every realm of the celestial and the diabolical. These sufferings are more than just incidents in life, painful as they may be. They are set within a vast realm of significance and effectiveness. They are, in the main, the 'kick-back' of a vast and mighty system of antagonism to everything that is of Christ.

We must therefore accept the fact of such sufferings, and adjust to the spiritual significance of it. If you and I ever do get the idea that the Christian life is to be a perpetual picnic, we shall get ourselves into all kinds of difficulties and perplexities and disappointments. If we seek to escape from the sufferings of Christ, we are going to cut the very vitals of our spiritual worth-whileness. Take heed to that. We have to accept the fact that, being the Lord's here, our inheritance is an inheritance of the sufferings of Christ, and we must not seek to avoid them.

27 MAY - Inward Relationship through Suffering

The very heart of suffering, the very heart of co-heirship with Christ, is this wonderful sense of inward relationship to the object in view, inward relationship to the inheritance, inward relationship to the result, the reward. And that is the explanation of suffering, of labour, of conflict. The Lord does not just give to us without cost. He always brings us into the cost of that which He is going to give. It will be grace all the way through, but He brings us into the cost of the reward. In the end, let us repeat, we shall acknowledge that any part we have had in it of suffering, labour, warfare, has been infinitely outweighed by what He has given and that is where grace will always be our theme; but I do believe that mingled with our gratitude will be this sense that the Lord enabled us to achieve, that He did not act without us and apart from us. He brought us into it, and there will be this deep, inward, heart-relatedness to the result, that we share with Him the gratification. That is the very heart of suffering, I believe.

What we have laboured for, suffered for, travailed for, becomes something over which we are very jealous. Suffering for anything is a very purifying thing. Take the matter of the child for which there has been suffering, travail. Well, other people who have not so suffered and travailed and gone through for the child can see all the defects and pass all the criticisms and arrive at their judgments, good or bad, about that child, and just stand apart and say their say about the child. But the mother may see very little of that. There is something for the mother which transcends all that.

There is nothing that is precious to the Lord, and which He would make the property of His people, but there will be suffering for it. It will only become their property in that sense as they suffer for it, and then woe betide who criticizes that! If you are detached from a thing, if you are detached from a testimony, from a work of God, you can do all the criticizing you like. You have no inward heart-relationship to it, and so you pass your judgments upon it. But if you are in it and you have suffered, if it has been a costly thing where you are concerned, then you are seeing more than all the failings, more than all those faults. The people who can criticize like that and judge and point out faults are the people who have not suffered.

28 MAY - Joint-Heirs with Christ through Suffering

"Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17).

This is not just an official thing, something that is a gratuitous gift in a mechanical way, as much as to say, 'Well, you have done a bit of work; here are your wages'. That thing has been wrought in us through the suffering and the cost and the warfare and the labour, and there is this sense of an inward co-heirship with Christ, if we suffer. It will be a very blessed thing, to us who know how much we are dependent upon the grace of God, how little we can even bear without the support of His grace; it will be a wonderful thing when at last He says, 'This is the reward of your suffering'. We shall say, 'Well, after all, it was our light affliction in the light of the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. How have we earned this?' But there will be some gratification in recognizing that the Lord has taken account of what we have gone through, and has brought us into a sense of His own gratification, and given us to feel 'Well, it was not in vain, it was not for nought'.

Why did I read those passages in the Old Testament from Numbers and Joshua? They both have to do with inheritance. I read them for this reason, that here were people who, in the first place, were concerned, were jealous, for the inheritance. And then they were people who were prepared to enter into the cost of the inheritance, after which, when they had got it, it was theirs. Yes, it was the Lord's, but it was theirs. Do you see what I mean? It is theirs. And many of us have gone through the years in toil, in suffering, in labour and warfare in the Lord's interests, and if there is anything that comes out of that at all, it is ours, in this sense that we are jealous over it with a right kind of jealousy. It belongs to us in the Lord. Yes, it is the Lord's, but it belongs to us in the Lord, the fruit of suffering and of travail and of cost. Your faithfulness in prayer, and in prayer-gatherings - it is not without cost that you continue like that. Your faithfulness in the upholding of those who go out, it costs. Taking the years over, it is not without price if there is anything. The Lord has given it to you as your inheritance; that is yours. All that eternal spiritual value is yours in Christ.

29 MAY - Seek to Know God's Principles Behind the Law

The Lord never just lays down laws in order to set up a system of laws. His laws are always the embodiment of His own thoughts; His laws are principles. It is a tremendous thing to be able to put your finger upon principles. Very often when precedent is not in existence, principle comes in with the power of law. You may not have a precedent for something, but there is a principle, and the principle is the precedent. Do you understand what I mean? You get the principle of a thing and you have the key to it all, and God is moving on principle, and anything that He says is not something just said to have things in a certain legal order, but because they are the embodiment of some great spiritual principle, because God is Spirit and everything that comes from God is spirit. When God says, "*Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together*" (Heb. 10:25), He does not mean keep your meetings going. "*Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together... and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching*". What day? The day of fulness, the day of consummation. Unto that you have to grow, and growth is corporate.

You know quite well, if the Body is more than a metaphor and it is that if you detach a member from the rest it will not grow any more. It is a simple law of corporate life. It depends entirely for its own increase upon its vital relationship to the rest, and otherwise any development of it will be entirely artificial. You might perhaps sever a member or organ from the body and give it some artificial stimulant and get some kind of growth, but it would be artificial because it is not governed by all the other governing functions of the body. The Body is no mere metaphor. It is a Divine thought embodying Divine principles and spiritual realities. The Body is not something that you can join, take up, discuss. This is not something of special truths, the Church for instance, the Body of Christ. No, it is not doctrine just as truth.

The teaching of the Church which is His Body will not get us anywhere as teaching. We might well have meetings and circles and classes to discuss that, but that is not it. It is the spiritual reality of this, and you can only come into this organically. That demands the corporate, relatedness, the fellowship. It begins with us individually and ends with us corporately.

30 MAY - Understanding God Through Our Experiences

The thoughts of God are not just ideas and abstract mental effusions. They are all embodied and expressed in a living Person, His Son, God Himself incarnate. God's thoughts have been brought to us in that way. We must remember that, while the Lord Jesus had an individual consciousness, He also had a race consciousness. While He, in His own mind, was a Person, an individual Person, He was in Himself also a vast corporate company, He was the nucleus of a great multitude. That is why you can never come into the Lord Jesus and be an individual. If you are in Christ you are only a part of something very vast, and all these great, these vast thoughts and intentions of God are all centred in His Son, embodied in Him, and eventually, so great is He, so vast is He as the sum of all God's thoughts and intentions, that He will fill all things. That, of course, at once puts a great strain upon even our brains, and I hope it is not just going to be brain work.

Vital union with Christ and vital union in Him is essential to the comprehending of these thoughts of God. The way of such knowledge is the way of life, and the way of life is positive corporate union with the Lord Jesus. The way of God's teaching is not the way of the classroom. The way of God's teaching is the way of practical handling of us and bringing about situations in which we have to know Christ in some new way, which knowledge alone can save us from despair, which knowledge alone can deliver us, which knowledge is absolutely vital and essential to our existence. It becomes a crisis like that, so that the true spiritual life is one of a series of crises which are ends and new beginnings; the end of something inadequate, the beginning of some new discovery of Christ, some new knowledge of Him. It is practical, vital knowledge, taught by and through experience. That is the way of comprehending God, His thoughts and intentions, and it is the only way.

At no one time can we comprehend them all. Moreover, it will take a vast multitude, a countless number, to grow into those thoughts. The most that anyone could ever comprehend will be a mere fragment, an atom. It will require that great multitude which no man can number to comprehend and express the thoughts and intentions of God.

31 MAY - The Negative Aspect of Overcomers

Overcomers do not stand related to anything partial. I do want you to take very careful note of this. It is most important that we are clear as to what it is we have in view. I repeat therefore that Overcomers do not stand related to anything partial. They are not the sponsors and champions of particular doctrines and interpretations, and such things. With them, it is not a matter of certain conceptions of truth and practices in relation thereto, although from time to time a specific emphasis has been necessary because at certain points particular weakness and failure has arisen. Nevertheless, in the thought of God it is the whole counsel of God which He was seeking to restore and not some part of it. Overcomers, if they are according to God's mind, are not people individually or collectively who simply underline certain truths and keep to that. Therefore they cannot be a separate and distinctive movement marked by just particular and specific teaching and separated from all others for that reason. They cannot be joined, you cannot join the Overcomer band. You cannot argue, discuss, reason out Overcomer truth and adopt it or reject it. You cannot have a Round Table for considering this thing, and then deciding what you are going to do with it. All such conceptions, mentalities and activities are ruled out. It cannot be taken up, for it is not an "it" as something apart from all God's thought.

Overcomer is the very embodiment of all God's thought. We have heard a certain interpretation given to a fragment which is repeated in those early chapters of Revelation. "*If any man*", and "*to him that overcometh*" and the explanation, the interpretation, is that at the end things are no longer corporate but just individual, and the suggestion or implication of that interpretation is that all that is in Ephesians is cancelled out by Revelation, that all the teaching on the corporate nature and expression of the Body of Christ is now suspended and it has become resolved into a personal and individual matter. "*If any man*," and "*to him*". Dear friends, I have always found very great difficulty in believing that any one part of God's Word rules out another part, and especially such parts as Ephesians; and while, there is an element of truth in that interpretation, unless it is safeguarded, it is very dangerous and misleading. Anything that is misleading is very dangerous

JUNE

1 JUN - Life and Spirituality are Ageless

The issue for the Overcomer is the issue for the Church, and only to those who, in this way of experience, under the hand of God, have come to know the Lord, to know Christ inwardly, who will go right through and right out. That is the revelation of the Overcomer, the Man-child, in Rev. 12. It is knowledge of Christ in life and growth, and that on the principle of the Body, organic and corporate, and again that by reason of deathless life.

The new man in Christ has a deathless life in which there is no old age or senility. I say that because many of us are very conscious of the latter. We know that old age is creeping towards us and we are very much aware of senility overtaking, that is, growing limitations in mental powers, concentration and application and mental endurance and in other ways; which means that naturally we are not going to learn a great deal more in that way, we are not going to comprehend very much more. We are going to reach our limit and then perhaps decline naturally. But what I am saying now is this, that there is that in us which in extreme old age can still be comprehending the vast, and going far beyond the capacity of nature. Spiritual knowledge is so different, spiritual apprehension is so different from natural.

The capacity of Divine life knows nothing of decay, of corruption, of limitation, of coming to an end or declining. It is possible and it ought to be the experience of every true child of God that even in old age they bear fruit; in this sense, that there is that which still is fresh and still in growth when natural powers are declining. Therefore I say this knowledge of Christ on the principle of life knows nothing of old age and senility; it goes on. Do not surrender to nature; that is, do not surrender your Christianity to nature; do not surrender to nature your birthright, which is eternal life; and do not think of eternal life as only that you are going to survive after this scene. Remember, it is a quality of life with all God's potentialities in it, all the potentialities of reaching the vastness of those Divine thoughts in Christ.

2 JUN - Christian Service According To the Mind of God

What is Christian service according to the mind of God? It is not our having a very full program of Christian activities - not necessarily. It is not that we are always busy in what we call "the things of the Lord." It is not the measure and amount of our activity and busyness - the degree of our perspiration and enthusiasm in the Kingdom of God. It is not our schemes, our enterprises for the Lord. Beloved, the test of all service is this: its motive. Is the motive, from start to finish, that in all things HE may have the preeminence, that Christ may be all in all?

You know the temptations and the fascination of Christian service - the fascination of being busy... being occupied with many things... having your programs, schemes, enterprises... being in it and always at it. There is a peril there, and that peril has caught multitudes of the Lord's servants: it is bringing them into prominence. It has made the work theirs - it is their work - it is their interests; and they are the more pleased the more they govern the thing and run the thing.

Sometimes that end is achieved by our being put out of action, and that is the test as to whether we are quite satisfied to be altogether put out of the work if only the Lord can be more glorified by our being out. If only He can come into His own, it does not matter a scrap whether we are seen or heard. In the grace of God it is somewhere to get when you are quite content to be put in a corner, to be taken no notice of, not to be seen... if thereby the Lord Jesus can come into His own more speedily and fully.

Somehow we have got caught up into this thing, and we think the Lord Jesus can come into His own only if we are the instrument. After all, what were you after? Winning your audience or winning your sermon... or winning your Lord? A great difference! The explanation of service according to God's thought is just this: what are you doing it for? Do you want to be in the work to take up the work to be busy? Or is it utterly and only if by any means He may come into His own? That God's end may be realized? And if it means that He can be "*all and in all*" by our death as well as by our life, have we come to the place where we can say, "*That Christ may be magnified in this mortal body, whether by life or by death*"?

3 JUN - Only What God Does Himself Is God's Service

There is so much and there are so many ways which claim to be "God's service" and "mighty works in the Name of Jesus." Thank God, however, that we have not to judge and decide what is and what is not true service to God. It is given to us, nevertheless, to recognize and emphasize basic principles by which all who claim to serve Him must judge themselves in this matter.

Now, of this service there must never be a judging after the seeing of the eyes or the hearing of the ear! This is a matter into which the senses cannot come without the peril of deceiving and misleading the whole life. The service of God like every other thing in relation to Him is essentially an unmixed spiritual thing.

There are two things at least which are basically wrong and inevitably disastrous from the standpoint of true spiritual value: one is the regarding of the work of God as a set system, just as any commercial, industrial, or professional system is a vocation or calling (So much is heard about "entering the ministry," "taking up Christian work," "becoming a missionary," etc. and this as static, organized, systematized); the other is going into service on the basis of an external appeal to the senses, the intellect, the emotions, the volition, by reason of a presentation to the ears or the eyes.

Without seeming to judge of this ourselves, let us state a further principle or two or re-emphasize in definite form: All-inclusively, only what God does Himself is God's service! This is basic to the entire revelation of the purposes of God in the whole Scriptures.

The Lord Jesus is most insistent upon this Himself: "*The Son can do nothing of Himself.*"

"The Father doeth the works." "The Father speaketh the words." "My Father worketh until now."

"It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaketh in you."

This principle was well recognized by the Apostles. In fact, it is the primary object of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: "*The Holy Ghost said....*" "*The Spirit suffered them not.*"

4 JUN - The Service of God Begins With the Cross

Only as all service is brought within the limits of this Divine ordering by a positive witness within the sanctified and quickened spirit of the "chosen vessel" can there be "the works of God" which alone count. This, on the other hand, rules out all our works.

Motive, good intent, laboriousness, enthusiasm "in the name of Jesus," "for the Kingdom," "in the interests of mankind," etc. these do not count in the realm of "the eternal purpose in Christ Jesus" if they are our own activities... with our own natural resources. It must be "God who works within."

We have yet to know the nature and immensity of the works of God... and how His ends call for His infinite energy; and when we have a little light on this matter, we shall see that all our works are "dead works" indeed.

The flesh cannot enter into the works of God; hence the measure of spiritual effectiveness is the measure in which the Cross of Christ has slain our flesh experimentally... not what appears to be successful Christian work, but what is done not by men but by God through crucified men. We must be content to have our fruitfulness and spiritual value registered in the unseen... and not be dominated by the scales of values as set up by men on the earth. One sign of counting beyond mere flesh and blood is the malice and fury of the oppressor... and his persistent efforts to get one out of the fight.

Finally, we can only get into the true service of God as we are put into it by the Holy Spirit. This is not as from the earth, but as from above. Men cannot make these appointments or ordinations! To press into this service of oneself is to meet the fire of God breaking forth. To touch this "ark of testimony" with our hands is to die.

Even after Moses had been chosen, had received the revelation, and had been commissioned, "God met him and sought to kill him." Why? Because the circumcision of the flesh had been neglected... and no flesh can serve the Lord.

5 JUN - The Divine Thought of Representation

What is the very heart and essence of the Lord's service, the work of the Lord? The answer is found in this word — representation. That may include many things, it may cover a lot of ground, but it may be a very simple matter indeed without a great many things. It means simply this, our being on this earth implying the Lord, the very fact that we are here carrying with it the implication of Christ. It conveys quite positively the fact that the Lord Jesus has not departed from this world, has not left this earth, but while in glory is also here quite definitely and positively.

It may often be quite impossible to say much about it. Now, do not make that a cover for silence. Sometimes it is impossible to say very much, sometimes it is impossible to do very much, to engage in the various forms of activity in what is called the Lord's service. There may be very severe limitations and straitness may be on all sides. It does not necessarily affect the matter of the Lord's service at all; that is not the point.

In the first instance, the service of the Lord is not the amount said nor the number of activities engaged in. The Lord's service is a matter of being, in the first instance. It is this tremendous implication carried effectively and positively in a vessel, in a witness, in a being, the implication that God is here, the Lord is here, the Lord is in His world, the Lord is in the midst, the Lord is available, the Lord is accessible, the Lord is near, the Lord is real, the Lord is living, the Lord is willing, is ready, the Lord is at hand — all that as a many-sided implication of our being on the earth. That is the service of the Lord. That is the very heart and essence of service.

The Divine thought of representation that the Lord is present and known by means of representation. This matter of representation for God is the very heart and essence of service.

6 JUN - How Should I Serve the Lord?

In this meditation we come back to this, that the Holy Spirit is most decidedly and positively the Spirit of service. This may be a very simple beginning, but it may do us good to just be reminded of this. It has always been the case that when the Holy Spirit has really gained His place in a life, that life has very quickly become governed and mastered by the Spirit of service, and I feel that something must be wrong if ever a Christian life loses the Spirit of service. If ever you or I lose that urge to the service of the Lord, something has gone wrong. I am not speaking about forms of service. I am speaking about the spirit of service.

So we find that, right at the beginning, the Holy Spirit created this urge to serve the Lord, became within the mighty energy to service. A tremendous concern was planted in the heart of those who received the Spirit, about the Lord being known by others, about the Lord being brought to others, the Lord getting His place in others and in all the earth — a real concern about it. That is a mark of the Holy Spirit. There is something wrong if that is not found in us, a real concern that Christ should get His place and be brought into His place in the people of this world. Let us ask our hearts quite honestly now — is that true in our case?

The Spirit of service is the Holy Spirit. Let us remember that. Everything will take its rise from that. It may be that there is not an adequate concern, no real passion to serve the Lord. Now will you honestly answer the Lord in your own heart on this matter? Ask yourself the question, Have I, above all concerns and interests in life, a desire to serve the Lord? It is not, How am I going to serve the Lord? Suspend that, put it back on the Lord. It is not whether I am going to give up what I am doing now and be a minister or a missionary. I am not talking about that. I am talking about the spirit of service, and the thing is, am I above everything else in life concerned for the Lord's service, to serve the Lord? It may be that I shall serve along this line, in this capacity or in that; it does not matter. The thing is that I serve. Above all other things that I do and through all other things that I do, however much I may do, that it is the Lord's service that is governing me, and is dominating.

7 JUN - The Making of God's Representatives

What the Holy Spirit does is to make people. He constitutes representatives, He deals with individuals. He does not give them, in the first place, something to say, He does something in them out of which all their saying comes. He does not tell them what to do; He so works in them that they go and do it, it comes out, it is spontaneous as the result of something done in them. Quite a lot of young men and women are ready to throw up business and go out and be a missionary. There is something romantic about it. They could serve the Lord so much better if you put them down in the heart of Timbuktu. But here they are in the heart of a tremendous crying need, and they are not serving the Lord at all. That is false and artificial. The Holy Spirit does not do that. The Holy Spirit makes witnesses or representatives — the same thing, and if you are not a representative where you are, do not think that by changing to some foreign land where they are dark heathen that you are going to be a representative there.

When we are constituted to be God's representatives, then the Holy Spirit disposes of us and puts us here or there, where He will. In His sovereignty He appoints to the sphere, but He does not appoint officials, He appoints people. A mere official may cut no ice at all, and the Lord knows that Gehazi may be the official servant of the prophet and he may get hold of the prophet's rod and go in his official capacity with the insignia of office into the death chamber where that boy lies, but nothing happens. The woman saw through Gehazi and said, I am not going with you, I am going to stay with the prophet! When the prophet came as the man anointed of God, he spread himself upon the lad, identified himself with the lad in a vital way, and he was literally dragged back from death into life. That is not official, that is vital, that is a person (2 Kings 4:17-37).

"Why could not we cast him out?" said the disciples after that ignominious failure at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:19). Perhaps they had tried officially thinking that they were the disciples of Christ! They had evidently made an attempt at casting out the demon. The Lord said, in effect, This thing is done vitally not officially, you cannot do this by merely bearing the name of a disciple, you have to be a divine representation!

8 JUN - There Are No Experts in Spiritual Matters

The service of the Lord is fundamentally personal and springs out of what the Lord has done in us, and it amounts to Christ coming into a situation by us. The service of the Lord is that He comes into us. All sorts of perils and dangers are associated with that, and you know how foolish people are, that immediately the Lord does something through a channel, by means of an instrument, people begin to make something of that person at once. 'Oh, let us call so-and-so, if only he will come, if only she will come', and they begin to make something of the vessel, and the next time it does not happen. It is the Lord and He is very jealous and you can never take anything for granted. You have got to recognize all the time it is the Lord, but this is the service of the Lord. That is why it is so necessary for one who really brings Christ into a situation, to be a thoroughly crucified person who will never take any glory to themselves, who will never allow people to make of them experts in spiritual matters, but it is the Lord. If it were not for the Lord, nothing is possible. It is only a crucified man or woman who can serve the Lord really because service is bringing the Lord in. It is all the Lord.

There is a lot of history behind what I have just said. If I am not mistaken, that is the explanation of all Paul's suffering. If ever a man brought the Lord Jesus into a situation, Paul did. If ever a man's presence meant the presence of the Lord, his presence meant that. But there is nothing in the natural realm where Paul was concerned which gives him anything whatever to trade upon. If we are not mistaken, the right reading of Paul's life is this, that Paul himself was more often than not unconscious of any demonstration of God's presence. If you had asked him, he would often have had to say, "No, all I am conscious of is extreme weakness, dependence, need, helplessness; I am not always aware of the mighty power of God resting upon me, I am not always aware of being lifted completely above my infirmities, weaknesses, I am conscious of them all the time; if anything is happening, it is happening in spite of all sorts of things which cripple and limit and seek to defeat and destroy me; the Lord is doing it in spite of these things!" I believe that was the true history of Paul. The Lord kept him there.

9 JUN - Nothing Is Over Till the Lord Says So

See the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh! Look at Him purely along a human line. What do you see? Well, men do not see anything but a man, perhaps a very ordinary man at that. Evidently there is nothing about Him as a man which overpowered them, which made them feel: Here we have a superman! No, nothing like that. Probably they saw weakness. *"His face was so marred more than any man's"* (Isa. 52:14). They saw tiredness. There was no difference between Him and us regarding His humanity, but there is something in spite of that, something that you cannot account for. It is not natural at all, it cannot be accounted for along any other line. There is something else here. That is the mystery of Christ. It is God here present in this weakness.

And the principle is carried over to His servants and to His Church. If you look for any explanation at all along human lines you will not find it. You will find a great deal which seems to provide a background for wondering whether anything more is going to be possible, and the mystery of Christ is this, that it goes on and it comes again and again, but it does not get rid of all these human weaknesses and limitations. It goes on in spite of them.

I believe we have got to come to some acceptance on this point. It has got to be something we settle before the Lord. That amounts to this, that naturally we might die, a hundred times, a thousand times; from every natural standpoint, you might take a very short lease of life, but we will live to seventy, eighty, ninety years of age — until God says, it is finished! I think we have got to come to a settled place about this matter, that we are not going to finish up, if we are here representing the Lord, until the Lord says, "Finished!" though all the best human opinion, all scientific wisdom and understanding, might say, "No!" Some of us again and again have felt that the end has come, but it has not been. It is a coming up again and again, and you cannot account for it. It is not hysteria at all, it is God, the mystery of Christ. Shall we not settle back on that and say, Yes, it will be, until the Lord says, "Finished" it is not going to be finished. You have your bad times and feel the Lord has done with you or that you are finished. Do not accept anything until the Lord says so, and you know when the Lord says so.

10 JUN - Service to God is Corporate

It is not what we are, what we do, at all; it is the Lord coming into evidence. That is the service of the Lord. The Lord is coming in by us in this representative way, and it is all Himself. That is the Holy Spirit's method, that is the Holy Spirit's way of doing things. That is the service of the Lord. Oh, it is not our going out to preach this or that or another doctrine or all the doctrines of Christ. It is that we are where we are in the will of God as being there for Christ, implying Christ, signifying Christ, and if that is true, hell will be provoked, for hell is ever-determined that Christ is not going to have His place. What we are saying is that it is a matter, not of office, but qualification, and qualification is spiritual. Spiritual qualification is that, by the anointing of the Spirit, Christ is brought in by us and this is representation.

We can apply that. Of course, it begins with the individual. It has got to be true in the case of every one of us individually just where we are. That has got to be the meaning of our lives. We call ourselves 'Christians'. What is a Christian? — an anointed one, and anointing means God by His Spirit is there.

But of course the Holy Spirit does not stop there. This divine thought is a collective thought, a corporate thought. It must affect and involve the individual, but ultimately it works out to universal representation in one Body, the Church, God represented in the Church, and then in the New Testament the one universal Church, the Body of Christ, locally represented. It is not just a matter of collecting a number of people together in any given place, people who have accepted certain teaching and therefore have a common creed and they meet together. The Holy Spirit is doing something deeper than that. It is not firstly external, from the outside, objective. What the Holy Spirit is doing is bringing into being in each locality a corporate representation of Christ, that that company there is Christ corporately present. "*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I*" (Matt. 18:20); it is Christ present. That is the meaning, that is the purpose, of a local company of the Lord's people, and there is something, as we have so often said, about the corporate expression of Christ which is of peculiar value, meaning and power.

11 JUN - There Is No Separateness in the Spiritual Realm

You must remember and maintain the fact that you are a member of a great Body, and in the realm of things spiritual there is no separateness. I wish we could grasp this which seems such an abstract thing, but, I feel, a thing of tremendous importance and reality. There is a great deal of pressure today being felt by spiritual children of God, terrific conflict, and when you look around for the explanation, you cannot find it. Some of us where we are have felt terrific pressure, conflict, strain, as though the enemy was out for our utter destruction, and we look immediately around us to see what the explanation is and we cannot find it. We cannot really give an answer to the question as to what it means from what is immediately around us.

It is not that something tremendous is happening round us, so great that the enemy is out to kill us for it. What is the explanation? I submit it to you, not without New Testament support for it, that *"if one member suffer, all the members suffer"* (1 Cor. 12:26), and are there not many members of the Body over the earth who are suffering immensely in these days? And if this Body is a Body that is bound together by a great spiritual nerve system, if the Body is a true metaphor or representative thought for the Church, it is not just an organization, not just a building of cold stones without life, but a Body which is shot through and through from the uttermost extremities by the keenest nervous system, so that you cannot touch a needle point anywhere without affecting the whole Body. That is how it is with our physical body, and if that is transferred to the Body of Christ, the Holy Spirit Himself being the nerve system binding the Body together, may it not be that those members who are suffering so much are registering their suffering in other members of the Body who are sensitive, who are alive. The more alive we are to the Holy Spirit, the more we shall suffer with other members of the Body.

The Holy Spirit means to draw us out to stand with them and for them, and not knowing, not having information as to what is happening, nevertheless, interpreting this as the meaning. There is a great need for our standing strongly, not only for our own life, but for the life of many others. There is no doubt about it, the Holy Spirit is making for corporate representation of Christ, and the devil is out to scatter saints, and, scattering them, break them down and destroy them, and the Holy Ghost is reacting to that because this corporate representation means a very great deal indeed.

12 JUN - The Governing End of All His Dealings

It is of the greatest importance for the Lord's children to recognize fully that, above all other things, His object is that they should know Him. This is the all-governing end of all His dealings with us. This is the greatest of all our needs.

It is the secret of strength, steadfastness, and service. It determines the measure of our usefulness to Him. It was the one passion of the life of the apostle Paul for himself. It was the cause of his unceasing striving for the saints. It is the heart and pivot of the whole letter to the Hebrews. It was the secret of the life, service, endurance, confidence of the Lord Jesus as Son of Man.

All these facts need looking at more closely. We begin always with the Lord Jesus as God's representative, the Man after His own mind. In His life on earth there was no part or aspect which did not have its strength and ability rooted in, and drawn from, His inward knowledge of His Father, God. We must never forget that His was a life of utter dependence upon God, voluntarily accepted. He attributed everything to the Father: word, wisdom, and works.

He is God manifest in the flesh; but He has accepted from the human and manward standpoint the limitations and dependence of man so that God might be God manifested. There is a subjection here because of which He is able to do nothing of Himself (John 5:19, etc.). The principle of His entire life in every phase and detail was His knowledge of God. He knows the Father in the matter of the words He speaks, the works He does, the men and women with whom He has to do; with regard to the times of speaking, acting, going, staying, surrendering, refusing, silence; with regard to the motives, pretensions, professions, enquiries, suggestions, of men and of Satan. He knows when He may not, and when He may, give His life. Yes, everything here is governed by that inward knowledge of God. There are numerous evidences in the "Acts" as the practical, and in the Epistles as the doctrinal, revelation of God's mind, that this principle is intended by God to be maintained as the basic law of the life of the Lord's people through this age. This knowledge in the case of the Lord Jesus was the secret of His complete ascendancy and of His absolute authority.

13 JUN - Our Ultimate Value Lies In Our Knowledge of God

Our Lord makes the statement that *"this is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him, Whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."* (John 17:3). This does not mean merely that eternal life is given on the basis of this knowledge. There can be life with very limited knowledge. But life in fulness is closely related to that knowledge, and the increasing knowledge of Him manifests itself in increasing life. It works both ways; knowledge unto life and life unto knowledge.

While the refining of spirit, the development of the graces, the removing of the dross, are all purposes of the fires, yet above and through all is the one object that we may know the Lord. There is only one way of really getting to know the Lord, and that is experimentally.

Our minds are so often occupied with service and work; we think that doing things for the Lord is the chief object of life. We are concerned about our lifework, our ministry. Soul-winning, or teaching believers, or setting people to work, are so much in the foreground. Bible study and knowledge of the Scriptures, with efficiency in the matter of leading in Christian service as the end in view, are matters of pressing importance with all. All well and good, for these are important matters; but, back of everything the Lord is more concerned about our knowing Him than about anything else. It is very possible to have a wonderful grasp of the Scriptures, a comprehensive and intimate familiarity with doctrine; to stand for cardinal verities of the faith; to be an unceasing worker in Christian service; to have a great devotion to the salvation of men, and yet, alas, to have a very inadequate and limited personal knowledge of God within. So often the Lord has to take away our work that we may discover Him. The ultimate value of everything is not the information which we give, not the soundness of our doctrine, not the amount of work that we do, not the measure of truth that we possess, but just the fact that we know the Lord in a deep and mighty way. This is the one thing that will remain when all else passes. It is this that will make for the permanence of our ministry after we are gone. While we may help others in many ways and by many means so far as their earthly life is concerned, our real service to them is based upon our knowledge of the Lord.

14 JUN - For What Was the Church Raised Up?

I do not believe that the Lord originally thought of having a general Church, and then a special one within it; a general mass of believers, and then a company called 'overcomers' in the midst. That has never been the design of God. It is what we might call an emergency state of things, and is essential because of general failure. It seems to me that the very word 'overcomers' presupposes that there is failure somewhere. The Lord's purpose for all His Church, as a vessel which nevertheless may only be realized in a few is that it should maintain the testimony of a life which has conquered death, and will conquer death right to the end. It is a life question.

The Lord Jesus is constituted the great Witness upon the ground of the power of God which was exercised in Him when He was raised from the dead. Remember that the testimony of Jesus is always related to His being raised from the dead; that is, that He lives by a power which has conquered death. He is the Life on that ground, on that basis, in that sense, and those whom the New Testament approves as witnesses to Jesus are not those who talk the truth about Him, but are witnesses of His resurrection that is, of course, in a spiritual way witnesses to Christ as risen. The New Testament's testimony of Jesus is that God raised Him from the dead and that He is alive for evermore. That is the essence of the testimony. Thus the whole question resolves itself into one of testimony in life, a testimony of life. It is not a testimony of doctrine in the first place, but a testimony of life. Is the flame burning as at the beginning, witnessing that Jesus lives and is triumphant, even over the dark, deadly background of this world? That is the question for the Lord's people; the question for your life and for mine, and for every collective instrumentality.

I have not the slightest shadow of a doubt but that the issue of our day, of this hour in the Church's history is, more than ever, the issue of life and death in a spiritual sense. There is a strange, deep, terrible sapping of vitality, mental and physical vitality as well as spiritual. Spiritual people, at least, know something of that. And lying at the back of it is the final conflict of this age. It is the spiritual issue of life and death.

15 JUN - General Usefulness Is Not Good Enough

One inclusive thing that arises from the Lord is whether a vessel fulfills the specific purpose for it or whether it has lost it in a desire for just general usefulness. The Bible would not have been written if the Lord were simply taking the view that no one can be perfect and that being nominal minded is acceptable. We may be thankful to the Lord for anything that there is in this world which is good and is of Himself, and we are grateful that the Lord should have any witness in a world like this; but, oh, so far as His own people are concerned, so far as the Church is concerned, that never satisfies Him. Of that we may be quite sure.

Many people say: 'No one can be perfect and it is fruitless to try to get perfection! Why not be satisfied with what is commendable about the Church today? Take it as it is! Accept it and be thankful that there are so many who belong to the Lord and bear His name in a world like this!' I find that this record does not allow of that. God knows that we are grateful that there are believers in this world, be they but poor ones. You are thankful for the smallest thing that speaks of Him. Oh, but when you come to see God's purpose, when you see that what He has designed for His Church is the occasion of His call, His choosing in Christ, you can never be satisfied with nominalism, or with general goodness.

None of the New Testament Letters would have been written if the Lord was satisfied with the merely nominal. There has never been anything perfect but the serious matter is that of our attitude to "*not having yet attained*". Paul said: "*I am not yet perfect, but...*", and very much hung upon that "*but*". The churches in Revelation had accepted their imperfect condition.

The Lord has reservations when it comes to the question of fulfilling the purpose for which a vessel was raised up. God will not commit Himself wholly to that vessel viewing its past history of divine blessing and usefulness or great reputation for good works, or any such good thing. None of these things is an adequate justification for the Lord to commit Himself.

16 JUN - The Peril of Looking Backward

There is the one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back, and is therefore not fit for the kingdom (Luke 9:62). That is the backward look. It is the look which Israel took in the wilderness. "*They turned again and tempted God, and provoked the Holy One of Israel*" (Psa. 78:41). They looked back and spoiled their furrow, they spoiled their whole course. They failed to enter in simply because they looked in the wrong direction, that is, they looked back.

You know that that was one of the troubles in New Testament times. The letter to the Galatians was written because of that peril. They were beginning to look back. There was a voice from behind; the voice of the Judaizers was calling them from behind: 'Come back' not to the world, not to ungodliness, not to forsake Christ; but to come back to a religious life which was less than that fullness of Christ to which they had been called; to a religious life which was not a spiritual life. They were in danger of looking back. They had indeed already half looked back and had come to a standstill. They had been going on, but now they had stopped going on, and the question was would they continue to go on or would they go back? That letter was written to induce a going on. This letter to the Hebrews was written for the same purpose. The peril of a backward look is always there, in some way or another.

And then we are told of some people who looked around when they were commanded not to look around. "*Look not around thee*" (Isaiah 41:10, margin). I think that is what Peter did. When he was beginning to walk on the water he took his eyes off the Lord and looked around and he went down (Matthew 14:28-31). His eyes changed their direction and he began to look around "*WHEN HE SAW the wind*" (verse 30). That is what Israel did when the spies went out and came back with their wrong report. They looked around walled cities, giants, all kinds of difficulties. They looked around, they got their eyes off the Lord. Only two of them kept their eyes in the right direction and they went through eventually to the end. "*Look not around*". That is, do not allow circumstances so to lay hold of your vision and to fasten upon your outlook that they control your movement. "*Let thine eyes look right on*" not around.

17 JUN - A Near-Sighted Vision

Then there were some people to whom Paul spoke: he told them that their look was much too near. He said, 'You only see what is immediately before your eyes, your vision is merely of things near you, these are the things that influence you'. Too short a range of vision leads to your life becoming smaller than the Lord would have it; you become far too easily satisfied and contented in the realm of the things of the Lord; you have a small, narrow horizon you are not looking right on. Things near that may apply in different ways. The things that are near are always the things that are most likely to upset us, to limit us, to disconcert us. We do become so occupied with the thing that is nearest. When we are right up against a situation and something is right up against us, we are in such danger of thinking that is all, that is everything, that we forget we have negotiated many such an obstacle before which we thought was going to be the end of everything for us. We learn our lesson so slowly. Here is another thing right at hand, right before our eyes; another mountain, another hedge, another real difficulty; and again we think 'This is going to spoil everything, this is going to be the end of everything'. All we see is the thing near at hand.

But to look right on means surely to say this 'Yes, this is a difficulty, but there is another side to it, it is not going to be the end'. It is one of the things that is included in 'laying aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset'.

What is "the sin which doth so easily beset"? It is this, that the big difficulty of today blots out tomorrow, seems to get right in the way of any future at all. That is the easily besetting sin. Do not have too near a view, do not have too small an horizon. "Let thine eyes look right on". There is something very much more than the difficulty of the day, the very present thing, the near thing. The Lord will teach us as we go on that we can reckon on very much more than the things which are up against us now. We shall go on and leave them behind. Do not let us take them as the limit. Whatever they are, they are not the end.

18 JUN - Keeping God's End in View

One of our words recently to a friend in baptism was the word 'eternal'. I pondered it during the day before passing it on. It took hold of me in this very connection. *"Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal"* (2 Cor. 4:17,18). The eternal is kept in view, and life is adjusted in every way to God's end. How busy the enemy is to circumvent the onward movement and the final attainment, by getting us entangled and compromised in this earth, somehow to slip in something that will be a check, an arrest, a holdup. Oh, the spiritual tragedies all around by some foolish relationship, some entanglement, some consideration of convenience, some pandering to the satisfaction of the flesh, something somehow slipped in by the enemy; and there it is - you just cannot go right on to God's end. Something is holding you back, some relationship is keeping you tied up, something has come in.

Now this word is - adjust everything to the end, have all your affairs in life brought into line with God's end. When you are considering a relationship, have God's end in view. When you are considering the next step in your life, have God's end in view. When you are deciding where you are going to live and do your work, have God's end in view. When you are deciding what your business is going to be, have God's end in view. Everything brought into line that is the meaning of this *"Make level the path of thy feet"* or *"Weigh carefully the path of thy feet"*. We have to say to ourselves, 'Now then, this is an opportunity, a prospect, that seems to hold a lot of good; but first of all, what is this going to mean for the Lord, how does this relate to the full end of God?' Nothing less than that must weigh with us. *"Let thine eyes look right on"* not just at this thing, not even at what it seems to promise, but right on. How does it relate to the end? In all things, look beyond; see what is the relation to the full end of God; and adjust accordingly. Get the vision, and adjust life as far as possible in relation to it. *"Weigh carefully the paths of thy feet and order them aright. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left"*. *"Let thine eyes look right on"*.

19 JUN - Looking Unto Jesus

There is a goal; there is a prize. We have been called with a high purpose - a purpose so great that the Spirit of God has considered it worthwhile to fill the Bible with the truth of it and with the continuous urge in relation to it. For the Bible from beginning to end has to do with a course in relation to a goal, an end, a prize: it is just brim full of Divine speaking concerning Divine purpose, a very great purpose. We find this, of course, in a very strong way in this letter to the Hebrews, with its insistent call "*Let us go on*". Moreover it gives us the great ground of confidence that the end can be reached, the goal attained, the prize received, the purpose accomplished, in that Christ has got there, Jesus has already gone this way and is there, and He has gone the whole way, the same way as you and as all those who are called according to His purpose are called to go. He has taken our level, accepted all that we have to know or may know on the course, and has gone through to the end. The fact is stated that He is there, and His being there is a tremendous triumph, for it is the assurance that we can be there also.

"Looking unto Jesus..." More correctly that would be stated "*looking off unto Jesus*". We are coming to that again in a moment, but there is a ground of confidence. We can have assurance about this matter of attaining. One illustration of this is given in this letter to the Hebrews. It is as though the writer saw a ship out on the sea, being grievously battered and thrown about by the storm, in the grip of the wind and the current, and then, if it were possible, one brave representative taking the anchor on a long chain and dropping it within the quiet, peaceful harbour, leaving it there for the ship to pull on, in the sure knowledge that it will come in because it has a vital link with something already there. That is the picture the Apostle presents of this matter. We have this confidence, this hope, "*as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil*" (Heb. 6:19).

There is confidence to be had, but there is also the possibility of failing, of falling short, of missing the mark. The possibility is always there, not of losing our salvation, that is not the point, but of failing to attain to the full purpose of God in our salvation.

20 JUN - The Mark of Humility: Dependence

What is one of the great features of dependence upon the Lord? It is prayerfulness. A prayerless life is a life which has not recognized its dependence upon the Lord. A life of prayer is a life which has come to see that it cannot go on far without the Lord. That is why I believe the Lord has ordained prayer as His way of working and meeting the need. He has said, in effect, You have to live by Me. If you can go on without Me all right, go on; but for My purpose you have to live by Me. Prayer is our way of showing that we are dependent upon the Lord, and it is the way by which, therefore, the Lord comes in and manifests Himself.

If you look again at Paul's revelation of the church, the Body of Christ, you will see how he lays down the principle of dependence, interdependence, mutual dependence, and how he strikes strong blows against anything in the nature of independence, separateness. The Body is one, and no member in the Body can say to another, I have no need of you. Every member must say, I am dependent upon you. The hand cannot take the place of the foot. The whole body is constituted to demonstrate the law of dependence. That is humility. The opposite of that is striking out on your own, being a freelance and snapping your fingers at anybody and everybody else, and doing without them. That is pride, and it is deception.

Pride is shown in possession or possessiveness; that is, taking hold of things to govern them ourselves, to be in possession of them. It is the work in Adam, and it is in all of us. It is shown in the desire to have in our own possession, to have in our own power, to have under our own hand, under our own influence, and it is a terrible thing. It is in us all by nature more or less, and the ruin of the church has come along this line of men wanting to take charge, men wanting to possess, men wanting to bring their influence to bear upon things, so that the thing comes into their hold. It is the ruin of the church. It was the ruin of the race. It was the ruin of Satan.

There is nothing like that about the Lord Jesus. His was a letting go to the Lord, a letting go to the Father all the time.

21 JUN - Having What Your Father Wants You to Have

Pride is shown in possession or possessiveness; that is, taking hold of things to govern them ourselves, to be in possession of them. It is the work in Adam, and it is in all of us. It is shown in the desire to have in our own possession, to have in our own power, to have under our own hand, under our own influence, and it is a terrible thing. It is in us all by nature more or less, and the ruin of the church has come along this line of men wanting to take charge, men wanting to possess, men wanting to bring their influence to bear upon things, so that the thing comes into their hold.

There is nothing like that about the Lord Jesus. His was letting go to the Lord, letting go to the Father all the time. Listen to some of the sublime things that He said: "*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me...*". "*All that the Father giveth me shall come...*". That is not mere passivity, but faith in the Father. It is our inborn desire to have a sphere of power, of influence, of domination, of government, that causes us to try to get something, to get hold of something, to possess something, to see something, to have something, to see the work grow, to see a success.

It is a mark of the house of God that there is no strain to possess for the sake of possession, to have power, to have mastery, to hold something. That is mine! Do not touch this—it is mine! The Lord Jesus had nothing in Himself, and wanted nothing for Himself, but He had everything in the Father. His attitude was, Father, if You want Me to have that You will give it to me. I am not going to strive, and worry, and manipulate, and work, and plan, and scheme, and be all the time anxious to have it. If You want Me to have that I trust You to give it to Me, and what You do not want Me to have I do not want! That is the attitude of Christ, and that is how the Lord builds His church. We must be very careful that this natural possessiveness does not come up in the things of the Lord. It works up unconsciously, even in our desire for spiritual blessing. It is to possess something in order that, having it, we may have greater influence, we may be something more, that we may become a dominating factor, that we may be recognized. Even a desire for holiness may have a subtle snare in it, that if we are holy it will be noted that we are holy, said that we are holy.

22 JUN - Pride Breaks Our Heart Fellowship

Paul was dependent, and self-emptied. There is a wonderful glory about emptiness when the Lord does it. It is not always a glorious feeling to feel empty, but it is marvellous how the Lord gets glory through emptying us, and keeping us emptied, until He wants us full. One of the things that the apostle said to the Corinthians in a kind of irony was: *"Ye are full... ye have reigned as kings without us."* That was no compliment. They are not to be admired for that. It was pride. *"We are accounted as the offscouring of all things."* *"Ye are full... ye have reigned as kings without us."* Yes, but after all what was it the Lord said to the church at Laodicea? *"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."*

There is an emptiness which brings much glory to God, and humility is being poor in spirit. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* God dwells with such as are of a broken and contrite spirit. God-centredness is the opposite of self-centredness, that all our wellsprings, all our resources, our everything is in the Lord, and all our interests are in the Lord. As for self-exaltation, the Lord made Himself of no reputation, He humbled Himself.

If pride, with these various aspects, led to death, then humility after this kind, that which Paul calls *"the meekness of Christ"*, leads to life; life by humility, life by meekness; death by pride. *"God beholdeth the proud afar off"; "Pride is an abomination unto the Lord"*. If pride puts us away back there, there is not much hope of life. When pride is out of the way God draws near, and there is life.

If, again, the result of pride in ruin was darkness, then humility, meekness, is the way of light. *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."* You will learn by that spirit. It is enlightening. We said that the great law which governed everything was that of heart fellowship with the Lord, and we saw that that heart fellowship was broken by pride in the heart, the heart lifted up in pride. Now, says the apostle, *"the eyes of your heart being enlightened"*. This is heart fellowship with the Lord, bringing about enlightenment, leading to enlightenment, or making possible enlightenment.

23 JUN - Humility Is Needed To Be His Dwelling Place

The whole thought and intention of the incarnation is: "*God with us*", "*God manifest in the flesh*", and dwelling in man. That is bound up with Christ, and that was in the eternal counsels of God. If God were going to dwell in man, and at some dateless point pride was found in the heart of Lucifer, and he reached out to occupy the place which God had appointed for Christ, that he should dwell in man as God, you have two lines at once starting off: the line of God indwelling man; and the whole course of demon possession - Satan seeking to gain entrance into human life and make it his tabernacle, his dwelling. Those are two courses of history. It is Christ and Antichrist.

What is Antichrist? In the full development of Antichrist it is Satan incarnate as God dwelling in man, being worshipped (mark you) as God in man. What is it that moves toward that? It is this evil thing of which we have been speaking: pride. What is pride? Pride is the elevation of man - Antichrist is the elevation of man to the place of God. All the things that are said about pride, independence, relate to that. Independence is man assuming personal rights, prerogatives, acknowledging no greater authority than himself, bowing to no one, a law unto himself, drawing things to himself in possessiveness, having them under his control, in his own hand, all things centred in himself and working toward self-exaltation. Pride in its simplest forms has all those elements, and it has only to grow. That is the soul of man by nature. That soul has only to exert itself or assert itself and you get a development of Antichrist, or the spirit of Antichrist.

What is it that marks the Christ? Is it this assertiveness, this personal drive? No. Christ is the Lamb, as it had been newly slain, and it is the Lamb Who shall overcome. What is a lamb? A lamb is dependent, in itself nothing. The Lord will deal with us in this way. If the Lord is going to constitute us His temple, if we are really going to be a dwelling place of God; that is, not to be brought to ruin, but to be established, to become a part of that tabernacle of God coming down from God out of heaven, God dwelling with man, what will the Lord do with us? He will destroy our independence, empty us of our self-sufficiency, bring us to the place where we have nothing in ourselves and our all in Himself.

24 JUN - What Are You Abiding In?

"*Abide in Me*"! When Jesus said that, He was getting right back behind everything to the great eternal factor, and in those simple words He was taking up the one thing for which He came into this world. It is the question with which the whole Bible is occupied from beginning to end, and the one question which comprehends everything that Jesus came to answer. The question: In God or outside of God? That sounds very simple, but it comprehends all the ages. It is the question of all time and eternity.

Do you see something of what the Lord Jesus meant when He said "*Abide in me*"? 'Outside of Me it is just a wilderness. There is no fruit there. If you abide in Me you bring forth much fruit'... "*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit*" (John 15:8). God's satisfaction is the one great thing through all the Bible. His satisfaction is now in His Son, and if we abide in Christ we abide in God's good pleasure and shall bring forth much fruit. If we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us as we are supposed to have we shall know in our hearts whether we are out of fellowship with the Lord or whether we are abiding in the Lord and we shall know because we shall feel that we are in the wilderness when we are out, and that we are in the garden when we are in. Jesus was very emphatic about this. He knew what a tremendous thing it was and so, eleven times in a short chapter, He said "*Abide... abide... abide in Me.*"

May the Lord keep us abiding in Christ! All other things will prove to be false and only what is true will stand us in good stead to the end. "*I am the true vine... Abide in Me*".

That is only one way of saying: 'We must know the Lord and our place in the Lord'. What are you abiding in? Are you abiding in people? Are you abiding in conferences? Are you abiding in a religious system? Well, all these things will pass, and the time will be when there will not be any more conferences and when you will not be able to depend upon any people. The whole religious system will disappoint you, but if you know and abide in the Lord Jesus, it will be all right to the end.

25 JUN - Spiritual Immaturity

The believers at Corinth had evidently made some inquiries of the Apostle Paul concerning certain particular matters which they thought were the cause of trouble and bad spiritual conditions. The Apostle postponed his dealing with these until he had dealt with what he himself was convinced was the cause of the trouble. This was not the particular "problems" about which they were concerned, but that which lay behind them and much more. They were occupied with the externals of the faith both as to personal, domestic and church affairs. The Apostle goes to the heart of things and makes it perfectly clear that their trouble was arrested spiritual development. Thus he mentions some of the symptoms which prove this. The first one was partisanship. They had men in their eye. Human selection, favour, preference issuing from temperamental reactions caused them to "hive off," form circles, parties around the mannerism, 'line of things,' or make-up of this man and that.

Some would prefer the mystical and poetical to the practical. Others the opposite. Some would take up with the subjective line of things and decline the objective and vice versa. And so on and on. Then there would be the men themselves with what was liked and what was disliked. Concerning all this, the Apostle says *"I could not speak as unto spiritual but as unto babes, I fed you with milk"* (3:1, 2). The fundamental fault with all this was that with them the Lord Jesus had not become pre-eminent; it was not Him always in view, to whom they gathered, whom they were seeking. It was the vessel not the treasure; the channel not the stream. In effect the Apostle says that it is a mark of real spiritual growth and maturity when the Lord's people are not influenced by the instrument as such, but have their hearts directed toward Himself, and are asking all the time, "What has this one and that one of the Lord?" So in this matter as in all others the remedy presented is a putting of the Lord Jesus in His place, which is the supreme place, and the place which excludes all human obtrusions, for or against.

The heads of these Corinthians were projected toward the servants of the Lord instead of their hearts being set on the Master. Divisions are so often childish, and when looked at from a point of greater spiritual advancement are seen to be so. Then it is perfectly clear that human elements played all too great a part, and if only the Lord Himself had been the dominating reality and object of concern, things would have been different.

26 JUN - Spiritual Maturity

There are two maxims which it will be well for us to have settled quite early. One is that we can only "go on" in the Holy Spirit. The other is that the Holy Spirit can only take us on as the foundations and "principles" are laid and settled. There are many of the Lord's children who, after many years of being such, are under arrest, paralysed, ineffective, and almost counted out because they are in a state of unsettlement about the "first principles." With some it is a matter of "faith toward God"; with some it is the matter of baptism; with some it is "eternal judgment." Let it be clearly recognized that on all such matters the Holy Spirit Himself will demand an absolute settlement and will not take us on to "full growth" until the "principles" are established. Why are there so many old-aged infants, elderly dependents, spiritual "Peter Pans" amongst the Lord's people? Why is it that after years of work and service so many come to a place where they are beaten and helpless because of being "without understanding" in that sense in which the words are used? Col. 1:9; 1 Cor. 14:20; Matt. 15:16.

It may be - and certainly sometimes is - because at some time the Spirit's requirement as to some basic principle was unheeded, argued aside, discussed, passed, or definitely refused. That is a sin against the Holy Spirit - while it may not be *the* sin - and that sin is bound to find us out sooner or later. What we have to say here as we proceed will make clear what we mean by this being found out. The letter to the Hebrews marks the transition from the fragments of the Prophets to the fulness in Christ, this fulness is spiritual and is consequent upon spiritual revelation which leaves all the "earthlies" behind and comes into the "heavenlies," even in the matter of Divinely constituted institutions, which nevertheless were but as "schoolmaster" to lead to Christ and maturity. We can still go on with the "things" and stand still as to the "meaning." For instance, it is impossible to have a revelation of the true nature of the Church the Body of Christ and remain a denominationalist or sectarian without joining issue with the Holy Spirit. It is equally impossible to remain a Jew as such (in the matter of Judaism) and be a member of Christ. Once the Holy Spirit has spoken or enlightened, tremendous crises are reached on foundation principles, and these crises if not settled soon will come up later. The Holy Spirit never moves a fraction from His original premise.

27 JUN - *The Gravitation of the Spirit*

And what does the Holy Spirit do with a life in which He has a free, full way? Well, He never allows that life to drop down on to low levels without the one concerned knowing it. You know quite well, in the very simplicity of your relationship with the Lord Jesus from the beginning, that if you make a blunder, say or do something, look or feel something, that is on the lower level of the old life, you are made aware of it, and you are not happy until you put that right. As you go on further with the Lord, you become not less, but infinitely more sensitive. You suffer very much more over lapses the further on you go. You know with increasing intelligence what it means to grieve the Holy Spirit. Why? Because the Spirit is gravitating back to the place from where He has come, gravitating back in us, and the whole gravitation of a Spirit-governed life is upward. It is a test as well as a statement of fact. Are you gravitating thus? Is there a pull upward? Can you be happy and comfortable living a low-level Christian life? There is something wrong if you can. That is very simple. The very beginnings of this life of ascendancy are found in the gift of divine life, and the whole course is the outworking of that life. When we come (if we do by the grace of God come eventually) to that place of Rev. 14, it will not be because of any particular merit, but simply that the life has triumphed in us. So you see the consummation of that great thought and purpose of God is glory.

The beginning is life, the end is glory. But what is glory? It is the triumph of life. The body of our humiliation shall be made like unto the body of His glory (Phil. 3:21). How shall this be? Well, it is all by the Lord the Spirit. It is all by the in-working of His life, resurrection life; glory at the end where life is triumphant. That is said for this reason, that this is the normal Christian life; and the abnormal Christian life is that which acts by fits and starts, up and down, and can be content not to go right on. There is something wrong about that; something has interfered with the normal growth.

Here you see that Zion is really something that is planted in us by birth. You remember that other fragment from the Psalms in this connection — "*In whose heart are the highways to Zion*" (Ps. 84:5). It does not say, Whose feet are on the highways of Zion. It is something subjective: Zion is inside, and it represents a tremendous transformation or change.

28 JUN - The Hill of the Lord

Here, then, is "*the hill of the Lord*". We have to identify that hill, first literally and then spiritually. It does not take very long to do that because the Psalms almost opens with the identity of the hill of the Lord. "*Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion*" (Ps. 2:6). "*My holy hill of Zion*" is, historically and literally, the hill of the Lord.

What, then, is Zion spiritually? Do you remember that that second Psalm was quoted right at the beginning of the church's history? When the earthly forces set themselves in array against the Lord and against His anointed ones, the latter met in prayer and quoted that Psalm, and the place where they were assembled was shaken (Acts 4). The very shaking of heaven came into that place. What did it say? You have touched the holy hill of Zion! Where is that? The Lord Jesus is ascended to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. It is the place of absolute ascendancy, victory, power. Who is Lord now? "*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed... Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion*".

Zion, then, is not a place on the earth: Zion has now resolved itself into the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ at God's right hand. Thus the apostle writes, "*Ye are come unto mount Zion... the heavenly Jerusalem... the... church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven*" (Heb. 12:22-23). It is no longer a place, it is a spiritual position. That is Zion, and we have identified the holy hill.

Who shall ascend? Who shall stand? You see, this is a present question. While the consummation of this lies at the end of the way, it is something which has a present bearing upon the life of the Lord's people. Let me say in fuller definition that Zion, or the holy hill of the Lord, spiritually embodies all that divine thought which the people of God will express when He has them, as He will have them, wholly according to His will. In other words — when God gets a people where He has ever determined to have them, He will have them in what is the spiritual counterpart of Zion — absolute ascendancy over all other powers.

29 JUN - An Inheritance to be Possessed

"Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." Phil. 3:8-9

So we begin at this time by reminding ourselves that in our coming into the Lord Jesus and receiving Him, we have been introduced into an inheritance far, far beyond our present knowledge and experience; and it is not only to be entered into hereafter. Do not immediately mentally relate it to the hereafter. If our Christian lives are not characterized by a continuous apprehension of greater fullnesses in Christ, there is something very seriously wrong with us. The inheritance is to be known now. Its fullness will extend beyond all time - it must, for life is far too short and limited for the apprehension of the 'all things' of God's fullness, in Christ. Nevertheless it is all ours now for our discovering, for our knowing, for our experiencing progressively and continuously now.

Firstly, it is the spirit of renunciation. *"What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ"*. Yes, those which were gain - not bad things, not evil things to be put away, not wrong things to be given up, not things upon which the Divine veto rests to be let go, but good things to be renounced for the best. That spirit has to characterize us that we will never be satisfied with *good* that is less than the *best*, a measure that is less than the fullness. Renunciation yes, of good things and things which in their measure and in their way may have been gain to us; renunciation of these for the best. Devotion of heart is breathed here. Oh, how this man's heart is set upon all that has come to him in Christ! What a heart Paul had - to exploit all the profound and unsearchable riches of Christ and to turn them to account! Devotion of heart.

30 JUN - Concentration of Purpose

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

".....but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this also shall God reveal unto you." Phil 3

"This one thing I do". In all the ways, in all the aspects, in all the phases, in all the many-sided occupations *"that I may know him"*; that I may know Him along this line, down this way, through this avenue, through all the avenues and ways of life, I am set to make one thing govern everything: to know Him; *"for the excellency* (that does not mean only the splendour, but the transcendence) *of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"*. Concentration of purpose - *"this one thing"*, an undistracted life, an undivided interest, everything gathered and focused on one thing; whatever comes must in some way be made to serve this end: my fuller knowledge of the Lord. It is the only way to economize in life; otherwise you have a lot of wasted things that count for nothing. Paul would look at everything and ask, 'What has this in it of potentiality to bring me into some further and fuller knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord?' Through sufferings, *"the fellowship of his sufferings"*; through conformity to His death, but always the cry, *"that I may know him"*. This is concentration of purpose.

Oh, there is the fullness. It is there, it is ours, but we need a spirit to lay hold, to persist; this spirit *"Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect."* That spirit alone will bring us into the experience of what is ours. It is a terrible thing to have been heir to a very great deal and yet never to have known what was ours. The Spirit of God would make us know.

JULY

1 JUL - Unceasing Pursuit of the Goal

"I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this also shall God reveal unto you." Phil 3

"*I press on*". 'I am not going to be brought to a standstill, I am going on'. Now this is exactly what the Spirit that was in Jesus Christ and that is in us will do.

The operations of the Holy Spirit, and the providential ways of God - strange, mysterious providences - these are all designed to keep us on the stretch. Any life that is really under the government of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, will never be allowed to settle down, will always be kept on the move - oh, yes, by strange means. The Lord knows how to deal with you and me. He knows the tendencies of our makeup, our constitution, our natures. He knows us exactly, every one of us, and (oh that we could believe it, really believe it always!) the way in which we are going is the way that the infinite, inscrutable wisdom of God knows to be the only way by which we shall come to a greater measure of the Lord. He vetoes much in order to economize, to ensure that we shall not be spreading ourselves too widely but be directed into the essential channels.

Yes, He deals with us because He knows us. His providential dealings with us and the Holy Spirit's operations in us are to keep us on the move, on the stretch, with a holy discontent, for there is a great enemy to spiritual fullness. Do believe this, that there is no time in the life of a true child of God or servant of God when they retire, with their work at an end. We ought always to be receiving so much from the Lord that we just cannot retire and keep it all to ourselves. We ought to be like David, who said, "*I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good... My heart was hot within me; While I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue*" (Psa. 39:2-4). No, the Spirit will keep us on the stretch, keep us in the way of the growing revelation of what is ours in Christ, so that we have more and more of Him, and cannot keep it to ourselves because it is too much.

2 JUL - Refusal of All Enticements

John Bunyan shows us that the pilgrims came to a place called the Enchanted Ground and the air in that country was so enervating and drowsy that they wanted to lie down and take a nap. It was all grown over with briars to slow up their progress and weary them so that they would succumb to the atmosphere. Mr. Feeble-mind has to be taken in hand very strongly by Greatheart, and Mr. Despondency has to be laid hold of by Mr. Valiant-for-Truth. In this Enchanted Ground there are many arbours in which you can turn aside and sleep, and some say that if you do, you may never wake up again in this life. There is one arbour which bears the name of The Slothful's Friend; in another two men are asleep Mr. Heedless and Mr. Too-Bold and the pilgrims do their utmost to wake these two from their sleep, but they cannot be wakened.

And now note - for this is what I am getting at; Bunyan is here so full of wonderful insight and suggestion. 'This Enchanted Ground is one of the last refuges that the enemy to pilgrims has; wherefore it is, as you see, placed almost at the end of the way, and so it standeth against us with the more advantage, for when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down as when they are weary? And when so like to be weary as when almost at their journey's end? Therefore it is, I say, that the Enchanted Ground is placed so nigh to the land Beulah and so near the end of their race. Wherefore let pilgrims look to themselves, lest it happen to them as it hath done to these that are fallen asleep and none can wake them'. I say again that a spirit of energy is needed if we are to prevail.

As they journeyed over the Enchanted Ground, they espied a man upon his knees, and as they drew up closely to him, he suddenly sprang from his knees with new vigour and energy. They interrogated him and found him to be Mr. Standfast. They asked him why he was on his knees, and, a little abashed that they had seen him, he explained that having come to this Enchanted Ground, he was met by Madame Bubble who came and offered him all her enticements not to go on, inviting him to turn aside, to take a rest, to receive premature prizes before he reached the City; and, lest he should weaken under her influence, he fell to prayer and so was saved, and could go on.

What need we say more? Oh, there is the fullness. It is there, it is ours, but we need a spirit to lay hold, to persist; this spirit - *"Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect." "I count not myself yet to have apprehended (laid hold)", "forgetting the things which are behind... I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the on-high calling"*. That spirit alone will bring us into the experience of what is ours. It is a terrible thing to have been heir to a very great deal and yet never to have known what was ours. The Spirit of God would make us know. He would stir us to great earnestness in

the quest that we may know, that we may possess the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

3 JUL - Turning To God from Idols

"Ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God." That is the first stage of the Christian life. Now, although they were pagans formerly, in a pagan world with all its system of idol worship, and you might think that it is not quite right and hardly fair to compare people of a 'Christian' country with those pagans and to class them all together, I want to point out that in principle and in fact the classing of all unsaved people with those pagans is quite right. *"Ye turned unto God from idols to serve" or "to worship"*, for that is what the word here means *"a living and true God"*. Now, the principle here, a principle which has many forms in many different times and ages and parts of the world, is just the same. These people had been giving the "worthship", for that is the meaning of *worship*, of their lives to other objects than God. Who is getting the *worth-ship* of your life - God, or... whatever else it might be? If you are not giving it to God, then you are giving it somewhere else, to something else, and that is idolatry. So the first stage of a true Christian life is this the realization and recognition that God is worth your giving everything to Him. He is worthy of having the *worth-ship* of your life, of having laid at His feet all that you have and are.

Now, when Paul and his companions - you notice he speaks in the plural, *"we give thanks"* - came to these people, he set forth in the first place the worthiness of God to have their lives, and to have them and their all; and as he set forth the true and living God, they perhaps suddenly came to realize - "Oh, how different from what we have been doing! How unworthy has been the way that we have been going in comparison with this!" It is the seeing of the worthiness of God in Christ. We sometimes sing, as we seek to emphasize and reiterate the all-captivating worthiness of the Lord Jesus -

*"Marvel not that Christ in glory
All my inmost heart hath won."*

That is where it begins. Anything less than that, anything other than that as a beginning will find us out sooner or later. Here is One who, by reason of His self-manifestation and of the great work that He has done for our redemption and salvation, is worthy to have everything that we count worthwhile in life. That is very fundamental.

4 JUL - Waiting For the Son from Heaven

"Ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." Many people have failed to recognize that that is a part of the foundation of the Christian life, and that it is a part of the Gospel of our salvation, and it is fundamental to a really right kind of Christian life, such as is here. *"... to wait for his Son from heaven."* What did that mean for them? We know what Paul has to say about the coming again of the Lord Jesus. Amongst a great many other things, it means this one thing, that everything of hope for us and for this world is bound up with the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Apart from His coming and bringing in His kingdom, there is no hope. For the Thessalonians it implied that all the natural pouring out of their lives had been a hopeless thing; that they had no future really for which to live; that life and the world was a great enigma.

But when they came to the Lord they did so on this basis: God's Son is coming again, and that will put everything right. Everything is bound up with Christ's kingdom which is coming. It is, of course, one of those strange enigmas that the world still has false hopes of putting itself right. Someone has said that "all that we have learned from history is that we have learned nothing from history", and that is just what is happening. We are learning that we have not learned anything, and yet men hold on for a better world. They are getting into deeper and deeper mire and perplexity, they do not see any way through, and yet all the time they are seeking expedients to save the situation and save the world, but it is a counsel of despair. The Word of God makes it perfectly clear that there is no hope for humanity and for this world apart from Jesus Christ being in the place of absolute Lordship in His kingdom. And these Thessalonian believers came to see that. They did learn something from history. What they learned was that it gets you nowhere except into more and more trouble, more perplexity, more and more despair. Then they saw that God's Son is coming from the Heavens to set up His kingdom, introduce His reign, and all will be well.

5 JUL - A Man In Heaven And Christ In You

The two great basic features of living Christianity are (1) *A Man in heaven*, and (2) *Christ in you*. Stephen saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God. He said: "*I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.*" That is the Man in heaven! Then as to Christ in you, the Word says: "*He, being full of the Holy Spirit...*" This is a fulfillment of the words of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of John: "*If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you*" (John 16:7). It is by the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus is in us.

Those are the two major features of a living Christianity. They are two things which have opened up into two of the great doctrines of Christianity: Christ glorified, Christ in the presence of God, the Man in the Throne and all that that embodies and represents; and, on the other hand, the indwelling of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Everything in a living Christianity is gathered into those two things; you cannot get outside of them. It is marvelous that the word is used: "*He... saw... Jesus*" (Acts 7 vs. 55). This man whose name is mentioned for the first time at the end of this chapter, Saul, not so long afterwards had a similar vision. "*I am Jesus*", said the glorified Lord to him on the Damascus road.

Satan thought he had triumphed absolutely when he succeeded in turning the first Adam away from God's purpose, a Man in the glory, but this speaks of the absolute triumph of the Lord over what Satan thought to be his triumph. This is God's answer: Jesus as the Man in the glory!

Then how will He bring the many sons to glory? "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" So that to be filled with the Spirit becomes necessary to the very purpose of God. Notice the effect in this model case! A Man in the glory, the Spirit filling, an instrument mirroring that Man in the glory. They looked upon his face, and it was as the face of an angel. Then: "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*" Is not that the character of the Man in the glory reproduced? Is not that conformity to the image of God's Son?

What a contrast! What religion can do, and what Christianity can do! What tradition can do, and what revelation can do! That was Stephen. He beheld, he reflected, because he was filled with the Spirit.

6 JUL - Living "Before the Lord"

"Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child." (2 Sam. 1) Like Another even greater, he grew up before the Lord, and it is of far greater importance than might be suggested by the little fragment of three words. That is the first thing that must be true of us that our whole life is not lived before men but primarily before the Lord; that there is always that about us which speaks of an inner life before the Lord.

When we are alone, shut in our room with the Lord, then everything is very pure. We know quite well that there before Him there is no deception, there is no feigning and pretending, there is no unreality. We know quite well when we come into personal aloneness with the Lord that everything artificial is stripped off. There we know that we are seen through, we are thoroughly well known; we can put on no camouflage, no disguises, in the Lord's presence. There we are what we are, and we know it, and we make no pretense about it. We cannot be on stilts or on a pedestal in the Lord's presence.

When we are with people we may put on a lot of things to cover up, to make believe; we may become very artificial. Even when we are praying in the presence of other people, we can be anything but natural. We are so conscious of them, and begin to preach to them in our prayer. We do not do that when we are alone with the Lord, we do not make up anything then. We are right down on the very bedrock of what we are, a certain kind of naturalness; we cannot be other than perfectly natural there. What we are as before the Lord we have to be when we are with people in public life. It is important, it is essential. You see, anything put on amongst people, anything artificial, is not our measure at all; it is a false measure, and it may be holding us up in true spiritual life and growth.

"Samuel ministered before the Lord." We might well take that for every sphere and every hour of life. *"Whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men."* (Col. 3:23) God said to Abram, *"...walk before me..."* That may be very simple in its terms, but it is something which has to do with a ground work for spiritual growth. People who are like that will go on, will grow.

7 JUL - Living "Unto the Lord"

"And the child Samuel grew on, and increased in favour both with the Lord, and also with men. And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli..." 1 Sam 2:18

A most corrupt, base, iniquitous thing was happening in Eli's time, a state of things utterly deplorable. Samuel might well have become a cynic, he might have become bitter and sour and critical. It is very easy when things are like that to be cynical, to be disgusted, and to have no interest in what we are doing, even though we ourselves are in no way compromising with the evil. But it seems that Samuel closed his eyes to a very great deal, and just kept them on the Lord, and his attitude was: 'All around me is very evil, very corrupt, but I am here for the Lord; I am here, in the midst of it all, for the Lord.' Thus was his spirit kept free from sourness and bitterness and cynicism. He ministered not to Eli, and not to Hophni and Phineas, and not to a mere procedure, to keep it going, but to the Lord.

Remember, that is a secret of growth. We may all have reason to say: 'There is a good deal around me that I do not agree with and which I am sure is contrary to what the Lord would have;' But let us be those who say, 'I am here to live unto the Lord, I am only doing it for Him, and so I intend to stay where I am.' That is a way of growth.

Eli was the embodiment of the religious order of his time, he was in the place of authority and for the time being had to be recognized as such. Samuel was submissive. He was not trying to oust Eli, nor to condemn him. It is so easy to do that; because you find something wrong at headquarters, you can easily become disaffected and critical. Before Eli, he takes the submissive and subject position and ministers to the Lord. No wonder he grew.

You will not grow if you are observing the faults and flaws and errors around you, especially in people who are holding superior positions, and if you are talking and spreading reports about them. Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli, in subjection and in patience, waiting until the Lord took steps to deal with that very difficult situation which must have been eating into Samuel's soul every day. It is our spirit that matters - purity, simplicity, earnestness, reality. That is what it means to grow, and to grow on.

8 JUL - The Practical Application of Christ's Headship

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." (Col 3:1-3).

That is the practical application of headship. *"Ye died"* that is necessary to put Christ in His place. *"Ye were raised together with Christ"* - not apart from Him; not leaving any place for self-government, self-direction, self-sufficiency, self-assertiveness, or any other expression of self at all. *"Ye died"*; your own headship of your life died with you. All other governments of your life died when you died. You died to all other authorities, to all other rule; to every other kind of direction, government, headship in principle; you died to all except to the headship of Christ; and, being raised, you were raised with Christ. It is *"together with Christ"*; and now in resurrection it is Christ Who is Head of the Body, the Church.

While this has a personal and individual application, it is the Church which is in view here. This elect body of people called the Church died to all other governments, just as Israel were set aside and buried in Babylon. It was the crucifixion the death and the burial of Israel when the captivity took place. They were sent away, out of the place of covenant blessing, the place where the Lord was, the place of the inheritance, the place where everything had been provided for their very existence. They were sent right out of it and were for that time dead and buried, simply because they had let in other headships. Idolatry was the cause; that meant that another headship, that of Satan as a mediator through the gods of the nations round about, had taken God's place, and God would not tolerate any other headship of any kind at all. So He slew them and buried them in Babylon, and when there was a raising from that grave of a company that came back, it was under the absolute headship of the Lord, and that alone. That is the principle of it. It was a corporate thing, a corporate resurrection, and under one head. From that time, never again was idolatry found among them. There is that about it; it cured them of idolatry that is, of another headship. You see the principle.

9 JUL - Only Spiritual Value Counts with God

When we come into the 'Ephesian' position, we are at once introduced to the pre-eminence of spiritual values. That is what 'in the heavenlies' means how things are viewed from above; not what they look like and seem to be from the earthly standpoint, not how we weigh and measure them down here on this earth, but how they stand from heaven's viewpoint, how the ascended Lord looks at them. That is what governs all the way through this letter, at every point spiritual value; not numbers, not what men call success, not all these things which are of such importance to people here, but just that which weighs with God; and that is spiritual value.

"...Hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing," or, more properly and literally, *"every blessing of the Spirit."* We saw how Paul sought, with both the Corinthians and the Galatians, to get them away to the place where the Spirit was the great, dominant reality. Now here that realm is brought fully into view, where the spiritual matters more than anything else. So if we want spiritual enlargement, if we are really coming to that greater fulness, we shall have to forsake these earthly standards and judgments and interests, and get to the place where, after all, nothing matters but spiritual value. How far is a thing of value in the Lord's sight? We may take it as settled that only spiritual value counts with God.

Christ is in heaven. We must know Him now only in a spiritual way, and no longer after the flesh. We do not know Him as men know one another on the earth. He truly said, *"The world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me"* (John 14:19). For the moment, that raised a problem for His disciples: they could not understand Him. They said *"What is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"* They came afterward to understand that perfectly well. Christ can be known truly now only in a spiritual way; He is in heaven. So here again the great phrase is *"in the heavenlies in Christ"*; that is, the great spiritual values are Christ known in a spiritual way.

Enlargement is a matter of knowing Christ. *"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). Paul tried to make the Galatians see that. His epistles are full of the name 'Christ' - the Galatian epistle as much as any.

10 JUL - Only Spiritual Values Must Concern Us

Well now, what weighs with me most? Where am I living? Is it on this wretched, earthly ground of people and things down here, or is it on the ground of Christ? Is it spiritual life and spiritual values that matter? If we can get up there and say truly, 'It does not matter one little bit to me how a thing affects me personally'; the question is how much of the Lord is there in this? How much can there be for Him? I am not influenced by people's relationships down here; I take the higher ground of the heavenlies and meet them, not as this, that, or something else according to earthly designation, but I meet them on the ground of Christ, the one new man. On that level there is nothing to impede spiritual enlargement.

Spiritual measure is not a matter of anything here, even for the Lord - its success, its support, its maintenance - but just how much it is answering to the full thought of God in a spiritual way. That is what counts, and that is heavenly ground. We know so well that if people are more concerned with the maintenance of something for the Lord on this earth - keeping it going, building it up, making it successful - they are in a realm of spiritual limitation, and not until they are completely lifted out of such considerations with the one question, 'How far is this answering to the Lord's fully-revealed mind?', and are governed by that alone, can there be real progress and spiritual enlargement. Is it not true? And it is impressive that people who are really tied up with some thing, some organization, some piece of work, some society, some mission, some institution, even though it be for God in all sincerity, if that is their horizon, if that constitutes their world, they are limited spiritually. They go just so far spiritually and no farther. They are bound by their own earthly fences, the fences of that particular thing. Get away from things, out to the vast range of God's eternal, timeless purpose, and you find all fences are down and spiritual enlargement takes place. It is the only way.

So we come back. What is the Lord after? Not just good things for Himself, however good; He is after nothing less than that great summing up of all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10).

11 JUL - Entering Into a Rest of Faith

One of the things which is lacking in so many of us is this rest, or, to put it the other way, the things which characterize us so much are fret, anxiety, uncertainty, and all those things which are just the opposite of calm assurance, quiet confidence, the spirit and attitude and atmosphere which says all the time, Don't worry, don't fret, it is all right. One thing our great enemy is always trying to do is to disturb that, destroy that, rob us of that, churn us up, fret us, drive us, harass us, anything to rob us of our rest or to prevent us from entering into rest.

It is the rest of faith, not just the rest of passivity, indifference, carelessness. There is all the difference between carelessness and carefreeness. There remaineth, there is still to be had, there still obtains, there still exists, there is still preserved a rest for *the people of God*. Every day brings hundreds of ways in which there is the opportunity to stand into the rest of faith, into that faith in the Lord which brings rest. It may be an incident in daily life, yes, in many, many ways every day, you and I can so lose our poise and our rest and our quiet confidence as to lose out spiritually, and the Lord lose much, so that it is proved that somewhere faith has been lacking, and with it the rest has gone. That is one side. It is a challenge to us, a real challenge. The thing that matters is the inner man.

We say, 'If only the Lord would deal with this physical matter or these circumstances or this something else! It is all due to that. That is the cause of it, the reason for it.' That is our way of reasoning, but it is not the Lord's thought at all. The thing is deeper down than that, and it is simply a matter of believing God; resolute faith, confidence in God. The Lord is trying to get us out of our variable and varying soul life where we are at the mercy of all our feelings, thoughts and reasonings and all that kind of thing, into a realm where, in spirit, we are steadfast. That is the point upon which it is all fixed in the Psalm. "*Their heart was not steadfast with Him*" (Psa. 78:37), and around that the whole of their forty years is gathered. The key to this is spiritual; tested by every other line, every other means; it is a spiritual matter ultimately. To be *strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inward man* (Eph. 3:16) is the answer to it all. The other may then give way; at least, we shall gain ascendancy over the other if it is not removed.

12 JUL - The Secret of Courage: Faith in God

Of that first generation, only two men got out of that soul realm, Joshua and Caleb. They triumphed in and over that realm. They were overcomers in that realm first, and then the Lord brought them out, but the fact that it was the rest of faith which was the secret of their triumph while they were in it is brought so beautifully, magnificently, to light in this fourteenth chapter of Joshua.

Caleb, one of the two, comes to Joshua. He is an old man now, but still living by faith in the position which he took up with the Lord years before. He took up that position when he went as one of the spies and when the great majority, the overwhelming majority, brought their evil report. They looked at God through their circumstances; these two men looked at their circumstances through God; it made all the difference. Caleb took up that position of looking at everything through God, and he is still living in that position; and now, as an old man, he comes to Joshua, and, while all the other people are being given their inheritance in nice, easy, prosperous positions "where every prospect pleases", Caleb says, Give me this mountain where the giants are, and cities great and walled up; this hilly country; give me this mountain!

What are you looking for? - an easy inheritance, a nice, workable cabbage-patch, something that is going to respond to your touch immediately and give you satisfaction? Are you looking for the flourishing land? The faith which brought Joshua and Caleb into rest of heart before they came into the rest of the land was this kind of faith. Give me a tough proposition! Here is a situation full of difficulties, full of threatenings, full of adversities; why, it is almost an appalling prospect, yet nevertheless give me a chance there! You see the challenge.

How are we facing the big difficulties? Sometimes it seems an impossible outlook and prospect, a hopeless situation. Perhaps for our own lives individually for some reason within ourselves or outside of ourselves, or for the work to which we are called, the ministry, the testimony that is laid upon us, it seems so utterly hopeless, the mountain is impossible. Well, what about it? Do you say, "Give me this mountain!"? Are you looking at the mountain through the Lord, or at the Lord through the mountain?

13 JUL - The Silence of Sovereignty

"And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:11-12).

There was a crisis in the life of a prophet, Elijah. He had inwardly collapsed and asked the Lord to take away his life. It was human weakness and failure. But while it is true that there was a crisis brought about by the weakness of humanity, yet we see the triumph of the grace of God.

Now the point upon which I am focusing at the moment is the silence of sovereignty where the Lord's people are involved. There are times, of course, when the Lord breaks silence and comes out in a terrible manifestation of majesty, of might, unto destruction. But that is not His normal way and specially not His normal way with His people and with His servants. His normal way is silence. It is really a matter of the Holy Spirit in relation to the covenant purpose of God and in relation to the Lord's honour, for I take it that the still, small voice (or, as the margin has it, *that voice of gentle stillness*) is the Holy Spirit Himself.

In such a situation the call is to faith to act. Faith is called upon to act when all seems hopeless, just to act. Here God is not accepting passive faith, He calls for action, the action of faith. How often a new practical committal has been God's way when all seems lost. We are so often found looking for, praying for, expecting, some mighty shattering intervention of God in our situation, the evidence and the proof that God is with us, something that we can lay hold of, something to which we can point, something that we can report on. This is a way of enlargement and God is enlarging in this way, silently, almost imperceptibly. He is going on with His covenant purpose. If you are expecting the Lord to do some extraordinary, miraculous thing in your situation, it may never happen. What God does intend and has intended will happen, if we will believe Him and act on our belief.

14 JUL - Dying To Ambition

What do we expect when we go on with God, when we come right out for God? What have we in view? Well, the answer to that question will decide whether, in relation to God, we have ambitions for something on the earth. Do you get the point? You see, it is so possible to swing over your natural ambitions to spiritual aims. It is the same thing still at work, and the only difference is the direction or sphere. You can be as ambitious in the work of God as you can be in the world, and it is the same natural ambition. It is the ambitiousness of nature.

You desire. What do you desire? To see something, to have something, to be in something? Ambition for success... yes, once it was in the world now the same ambition transferred to other things.

You see, it is very often to the children the kindergarten the elementary stages of faith, where there is not the capacity to take very much strain, that God has to give quick results and manifest signs. The marks of maturity are equally the withdrawing of outward manifestations and signs the demand to walk with God alone for God's own sake. It is a mark of graduation in the school of God that He can withdraw outward things. It shows that we have passed the test as to whether we are ambitious in this life.

It is a mark of going on when we can come to the place where it is true before God that we have let go all the prosperity and success even of Christian work and Christian ministry (as men would count). It is a sure sign of growth to be able to let go the great opportunities and the great advantages that may be had amongst Christian people... and the prizes that can be grasped... and to say: "It is all right, the Lord knows; it is for Him to give or withhold. I am not going to make a line for those prizes. I am not going to allow those things to influence my walk with God. Ambition is not going to dictate my course."

The way of Life demands that we shall get before the Lord and say, "Lord, though all my earthly prospects fade, though all my ambitions are disappointed, it is You I want. You are my ambition my goal. If I have You, these other things will count for much less." But let us remember that His desire is to have us for Himself for His own sake; and as we fall into line, Life is found there. It is the way of Life. The law of Life demands that everything should be for the Lord...

15 JUL - The Principle of Safety

God has left us in no doubt that He has a clearly defined purpose in view as the ultimate object of all His dealings. He has also made it abundantly clear what that purpose is. Further, it is distinctly shown that believers are "*called according to his purpose*", and that they are to '*make their calling and election sure*'. One who was an aged and advanced believer, and a greatly used servant of God, said toward the end of his course that his great concern was that he '*might apprehend that for which he had been apprehended by Christ Jesus*'.

It is the business and duty of every true Christian so to study as to be quite clear as to what that 'Eternal Purpose' is. Having done so, everything that arises to engage us must be brought to the judgment bar of that purpose, and interrogated in its light. God will not cut across our path, or give us particular light at any fork in the road, if we have not been diligent in this quest, or faithful to the light given. It just will not do to allow ourselves to be influenced by questions of comparative right or wrong, good or bad, permissibility, desirability, expediency, or policy. Nor must ambition, soul-gratification, enlarged prospects 'for the Lord', wider acceptance in Christianity, or any such thing, colour our judgment or affect our decision. Advantage and cost are ruled out here as deciding factors. One question, and one alone, will decide tragedy or glory: Does this that is before me stand directly in line with the full purpose of God? When the end is reached, the full story told, the sum taken, how much that is bound up with this will be stripped off, as having no real substance with what is Christ, and therefore fail to be carried over into the eternal? What will the River carry away, and what will emerge on the other side? This was the big question that Paul put to the Corinthians.

The peril or snare will be cunningly and ingeniously adapted to the 'prey'. What would capture some would make no appeal to others. The most spiritual will be presented with what appears to be most spiritual. Our particular temperament will be our peculiar danger. We shall have to, ever and always, be governed by principle, and not by feelings, preferences, arguments, or natural appeal. Intellectual palliatives (i.e.: alleviating pain and symptoms without eliminating the cause), emotional ecstasies, activity-gratifications must be suspected or challenged. The one question must be paramount: Where does this lead? Does it essentially and intrinsically relate to the one supreme purpose of God?

16 JUL - "Let Us Run"

"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:3).

"Let us run". It is not so much the running or the race that is in view but *the goal, the prize*. What is the objective of our running? Ideas about this vary greatly, and much evangelism limits it to the fact of being forgiven and going to heaven. When, however, we come to the New Testament, which is our final authority on the matter, we find that although blessings and heaven and glory are included, the real objective is *a Person*. The prize turns out to be a person, and that person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The beginning of Hebrews' epistle gives us one of the two or three classical presentations of the person of the Lord Jesus. The first five verses provide us with a superlatively beautiful presentation of God's Son. It is to this Son Jesus that we are to look as we run. *He* is the goal; *He* is the prize. The letter has as its supreme object the setting forth of Divine fullness and finality in God's Son, presented to faith for faith's apprehension and appropriation. *Fullness in Christ* is the gathering up of all into Him. *Finality in Christ* is the completion and realization of all in Him. It goes on to consider in greater detail what He is and what He has done, His manifold capacity and ministry as God's Son, turning then to an exhortation that we should keep this well in view and pursue our race with fullness and finality in Christ as our objective. Our lifetime will not be sufficient for us to attain to this: eternity will be required for us to discover what fullness really is.

If the goal and prize is Christ, then the race will resolve itself into overcoming everything that is not Christ. The Christian life is a course, and a very strenuous course, calling for our utmost concentration, consecration and abandon. After all, progress can never be made unless there is something to work against, and strange as it may seem, friction seems almost essential to progress. One cannot run on ice, and one can only make slow and unsatisfactory progress on deep sand. There must be something against which one can press and push, something that provides resistance and which has to be resisted and overcome. So our race is a matter of overcoming, and supremely of overcoming the natural by the spiritual.

17 JUL - Natural Instinct - or - The Mind of the Spirit?

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run, that ye may attain." (1 Corinthians 9:24)

Paul told the Corinthians to run and later added: *"So I run"* (1 Corinthians 9:26). We do not have to look far to discover what you had to run against if you lived among those Corinthians. The letter begins with the complete contrast between the spiritual man and the natural man, showing that in this race the spiritual man has to run against the natural, and defeat him. We must be careful to note that it is not a question of overcoming the natural man by the natural man; that is a hopeless endeavour. No, the spiritual man is the new creation man, born of the Spirit and now the deepest inner reality of the Christian. The fact is that within the sphere of a Christian's being there is the natural man who always hinders God's purposes, and the 'hidden man of the heart' who is governed by the mind of the Spirit. And the attaining of the prize is the result of the progress and growth of what is of Christ in the life and the leaving behind, often by conflict, of that which is not Christ.

Our natural mind is a great obstacle in the race which we are running, cropping up all the time with its complexes, its arguments, its interests and its methods. When the Corinthians were brought into the Church they left behind their obvious sins, but they carried over into their new realm the old, natural ways of thinking and reasoning which belonged to the world and not to the Spirit of God. But the apostle remonstrated with them: *"But we have the mind of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 2:16), so urging them to allow the cross to be planted between the natural mind and the spiritual. We shall only come to the fullness of Christ as we leave behind the mind of the natural man and move on more and more in the progress of the mind of Christ. On everything - every judgment, every conclusion, every analysis, every appraisal - we must ask the Lord: 'Is that Your mind, Lord, or is it mine?'

There was no man who had stronger convictions as to the rightness of his course than Saul of Tarsus. The great revolution which took place in him when he came to Christ was that he had to say: 'I have been all wrong in my fundamental way of thinking'. After that confession he made good headway in the race because he was always ready to subject his thinking to the jurisdiction of his crucified Lord. This is the way of spiritual progress.

18 JUL - Natural Emotions – or - The Love of Christ?

Paul wrote to the Galatians: *"Ye were running well: what did hinder...?"* Something had broken in and interrupted their running in the spiritual race. This was extremely serious and disturbed Paul to the depths of his being. They seem to have been of that temperamental constitution which corresponds to Christ's words in the parable about seed falling into shallow soil. The seed was received quickly and earnestly, but did not go on to produce a harvest. There are some people who make an enthusiastic start in this way and make quite a stir about it, but then do not go steadily on. These Galatians were like that; they made a tremendous response; they loudly protested their devotion; and then they were very quick to drop out of the race. Why? Because they lived on their emotions, on their feelings, and these were changeable. This may well be a matter of temperament, but in fact something of such a characteristic can be found in most of us. We respond to an appeal, come under the power of a great emotion, and then slack off. In the words of the Lord Jesus: *"When tribulation or persecution ariseth... he is offended"* (Matthew 13:21).

Clearly, then, if you and I are going to persevere to the end we must have a greater power than that of our natural emotional life. The only hope is that it may be true of us, as of Paul: *"The love of Christ constraineth"* (2 Corinthians 5:14). There is all the difference between the natural and the spiritual in this matter of the energy of love. This word translated *'constraineth'* is the same one used over the arrest of Jesus when it says: *"the men that HELD Jesus"* (Luke 22:63). So it is that the love of Christ should hold or grip us, conquering our natural emotions by the mighty power of the Spirit. Our feelings come and go. They may be strong at times but they can also grow very weak. If we do not know something of the mighty grip of Christ's love, we will never go right through to the end of this strenuous race. After all, it is the love of Christ which makes for the fullness of Christ. If we finally come to that fullness it can only be by the constraint and holding power of His love.

"Ye were running well: who did hinder you?" The answer is: you ran in the strength of your own emotions; you ran as your enthusiastic response to God's call because it affected your feelings for the time. The letter to the Galatians is devoted to emphasizing the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, for He alone can supply the necessary energy of love for us to go on running well.

19 JUL - The Natural Will – or - The Will of God?

A comparison is made with Israel in the wilderness as being an example of those who set out but who never finished the race. What was the matter with them? There is a reference which perhaps touches the secret core of their failure: *"A generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God"* (Psalm 78:8).

This seems to indicate a breakdown in the matter of the will. It is true that the Hebrews may have been stumbled by the natural mind and natural emotions, but the main point of failure seems to have been, like Israel of old, in the realm of the will. Whether this natural will is regarded as weak or strong, it has a treacherous effect on spiritual life. There can only be real progress as this natural will is set aside in favour of the will of God.

It was on this basis that the great Author of our faith set out on His race: *"I am come... to do thy will, O God"* (Hebrews 10:7). What a battle He had to remain true to the will of God! Even with Him there was that which had to be brought under or set aside, and His was a perfect nature. Our natures are far from perfect, so clearly we shall need to be conquered by the will of God if we are to make progress in the race.

We should remember that the opportunity to know this all-embracing fullness of Christ only comes to us because of His infinite capacity for letting go. But for that, He would never have come to us at all. But for that, He would never have put up with life here on earth for one single day. The story of the laying aside of His glory, the emptying of Himself, His humiliation, His death on the cross, would never have been written if it had not been that He was able at all points to let go and accept the will of God.

"Wherefore... God highly exalted him, and gave unto him..." (Philippians 2:9)

20 JUL - The Divine Purpose of Travail

You know, if you don't suffer for a thing, you don't value it. If it costs you nothing then it means little to you. If you have really suffered agonies and anguish for anything, for anyone, over any matter, that thing is of infinite preciousness to you. You're going to fight for that, you're going to watch over that with keen jealousy. That is something very precious. And is not that just how the law of travail works? Yes! It's like that. If it comes without travail, without any cost, well it's taken too lightly, isn't it? - far too lightly...

The Lord introduced this factor that in every birth it's a question of life or death. Life and death are in the balances every time. The governing question: how is it going? You're held in tension... and when it's alright, how the heart goes out: thank God! Thank God... Worship. God comes into His place. God comes into His place, very often with those who have never given Him any place before, at any rate there is a spontaneous: "Thank God!" You see the principle; you see how true it is. And so God established this, ah yes, this painful way, this suffering way, as the only way in which He could recover and establish the law of values, of preciousness, and save man from his superficiality with regard to the most costly things.

He did it in order to secure a heart relationship with Himself and with everything that comes from Him. A heart relatedness, that is, *love!* Love! - a love that is far removed from despising the Lord or anything of the Lord; a love that involves the very life itself; that if its object is lost then life itself goes with it. See? It's like that.

Anything that comes from God will sooner or later pass into the realm of suffering, into the realm of travail, to find out how much value we put upon it, how much it really means to us, how much we have seen of God in it. It will become a matter of life or death. Under this law all divine things have been put upon this basis.

It is therefore a very important thing that we should understand the meaning attached to this law, why God introduced it and established it and has never lifted it, and never does; but holds all history of individuals, of families, of society, of nations, and peculiarly of the Church to this law. I say, it's very important that we should understand the divine meaning attaching to travail.

21 JUL - The End of the Law of Travail

Individually or as a people, we may go through times of deep suffering, trial, and everything seems to be in the balances. How is it going ... is it life or death? We're in the grip of this crisis. Oh, let us believe with all our hearts that although we come this way again and again in our history, under the hand of God, it's unto something new! It's unto something better! It's unto a new hope with a new expectation! Don't you believe that the end is shame, is remorse, is disappointment. God never established the law of travail that that should be the end, but that there should be a birth of something infinitely precious. And it happens again and again in our lives.

Every new emergence of something of the Lord is more precious than what was before, but it's costly. It's costly. If I may say so, dear friends, it may be that we here have been going through travail, we're in the time of suffering and perhaps we're inclined to feel that it's an end, there's going to be loss. No! That's not the Lord's way. The Lord has so worked that, isn't it strange? We come into experiences in life where it's the most terrible experience you've ever had and now, and now of course, this is the end. This is going to put the finish to everything. And it is the most terrible suffering! And when it's past, the strange thing about human nature is that we forget; we forget the anguish - that is, it passes. But what it has brought is the thing that governs and dominates everything, isn't it? - the values that have come. Supposing we were always living in all the anguishes that we have ever had, life would be unbearable. But that passes; but we are living in the values.

Do remember that cheapness in relation to the things of God will only end in disaster. Unbelief will end in despair. The faith in God in a dark and difficult day will produce something new and something better. If we are too easy-going about our spiritual values, nothing substantial will be affected.

The Lord give us a due sense of the value of everything that He has given us and brought us into, that we will not be able just to discard it and throw it away as though it didn't matter. May we be saved from that and have this law of love, infinite love for Him and all things that are in Him, written deep in our hearts.

22 JUL - The Pattern Son's Inward Separation

Let us look again at the One who has set for us the pattern. Firstly, it was His inward separation from sin that is important. There was a great gap between Him and sin. It is said of Him that He *"knew no sin"* (2 Corinthians 5:21), that He was *"separated from sinners"* (Hebrews 7:26). That is, that in His nature He was separate from the rest of men, there was an inward separation. Now, we are not constituted as He was, as sinless, but we are told and made to understand in the New Testament that that inward separation, which was so true of Him, can be made true in us. Paul has a way of putting it. He calls it: *"the circumcision of Christ"* (Colossians 2:11), and he says that it is a thing of the heart, an inward separating between what we are in ourselves and what we are in Christ, the putting of a gap between the two. And then the New Testament says that by the Holy Spirit's enablement, by the Holy Spirit's power, you need not live on the ground of what you are in yourself, you can live on the ground of Christ; and living on the ground of Christ you need not be the slave of yourself and your sinfulness. You are delivered.

That sounds very technical, I know, but it is very practical. We know it very well. We who are Christians know that a cleavage has been made in us, and that we are now two people. There is that side which is our new life, our new relationship, which is our Christ-connection. There is that other side which is still our old relationship with the old Adam. It is there: it is not cauterized, it is not annihilated; and we know now that it is for us to take continually the power of the Holy Spirit, in virtue of that separating cross, to keep on the Christ side, on the new side; and if we do, we know that it is glory. Very often we know more of the meaning of the glory by a touch of the other. Step over on to the other side and give way to the old Adam, and you know quite well there is no glory there.

The enemy, the great enemy of the glory, was ever seeking to contaminate Him, involve Him, pollute Him, corrupt Him. Let us not think that He never had to resist anything, that He never had to say 'No' to another. That matter of how a sinless Man could be tempted is of course an old theological problem, but there is no doubt about it, that He fought our battle in all reality. So that is the first thing - an inward separation, a divide; and on the one side, the new life, the ground of the incorruptible, which is the ground of glory. *"This mystery,"* says Paul, *"which is Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Colossians 1:27).

23 JUL - The Outward Separation of Christ

Christ's inward separation had its outward effect or outworking in separation from the world, and no one will think for a moment that I mean physical separation from the world. No, He was here right in it, in its throng and press, in its affairs, with everything pressing upon Him; never seeking to live the life of a hermit, detached from the world, but right in it and yet while rubbing shoulder to shoulder with the world, having all the contacts of this world in every form, there was a distinctiveness about Him. He was not a part of it, but apart from it, a wonderful outward separation. While being able to talk with the grossest and the most defiled and the people most involved in this world, He was yet by no means a part of their system, their order, their way of life, but outwardly separate from the world.

The most unhappy people in this world are Christians who try to have both worlds. It is my experience that if you want to find a miserable Christian, you must find what is called 'a worldly Christian', one in whom a constant civil war goes on between two kingdoms. Yes, a Christian in this world, trying to get something out of this world is a miserable creature. You try to live on a border-line or border-land Christian life and you will be a miserable person, without rest or peace or joy or anything else. You will never know exactly where you are, who is your master, which way you are going, to whom you belong. It is a miserable existence.

The Lord Jesus was not like that. He was on one side and absolutely on one side. He was attached to heaven, and He maintained that attachment. You and I, if we are going to know glory now and glory afterward, will have to be on the same ground as He was in this matter - no compromise with the world; in it, having to do our work here, having to meet people here, having to be friendly in a way, yet not one with their nature, their realm, their way. It is a difficult thing - not as easy to do as to say; it works out in many practical ways. The point is that Christ was wholly for God, and because of that, His Father was the Father of glory, and the Spirit of glory rested upon Him, and the Father could give Him glory.

24 JUL - The Place Where He is Gladly Received

"Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village (do not forget that villages represent local assemblies): and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house." Luke 10:38

Now here, in this first mention of Bethany, which in principle represents that Church, and that assembly, and that house, which the Lord has His heart set upon, and I fasten at once upon one word: *"And a certain woman named Martha received him into her house."* The word *"received"* is the key-word to this whole thing, and it represents immediately a great difference. It is a discriminating word, a differentiating word.

His assembly, His spiritual house, is the place where He is gladly received and finds His rest. It is His place, His place in a world which rejects Him; it is the place where He is recognized. Do you notice that when assemblies are being scattered over the face of the earth it is always that which is the beginning of an assembly (the ones who receive His word)? They *"receive"* the word. Pentecost was that. *"Then they that received his word..."* (Acts 2:41) At Philippi, *"a certain woman named Lydia... besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there"* (Acts 16:14,15). That is the beginning of the assembly it is like that everywhere. It is a spiritual perception issuing in an open-hearted reception. That is the first thing which befeatures His Church: *"received"*. It is the giving Him a place, the place of honour.

Now that is very simple, but it represents much to the Lord, and it carries us a long way, because it represents something more than the Lord coming just to be a sojourner in the midst. It represents that the Lord has got a footing, a foothold, a place which provides Him with that which is necessary to Him to secure all His rights universally. And that is why the Lord would have His Church here in assemblies, local assemblies, over the face of the earth. They are testimonies to His rights, in a world where those rights are disputed and disowned; and they stand there to say: When He comes back, they are to be the means, the instrument, of His recovery of those rights which have been disputed and from which He has been driven out. There is a good deal bound up with receiving the Lord. He is coming back to His own because He is already there in possession.

25 JUL - The Mark of the House of the Lord

Matthew 26:6-13 talks of the woman (church) with her "*alabaster cruse of exceeding precious ointment*". The incident speaks to us in the first instance of the recognition of the worth of the Lord Jesus. All who looked on as good as said: 'He is not worth it'; that is what it amounted to. 'He is not worth it.' Of course they would not have put it like that. She recognized His worth that He was worth the 'exceeding preciousness'. It was the exceeding preciousness of Christ that was in view here, as something recognized. That, I think, is the main feature. It is a feature of Bethany, it is a feature of the upper room, it is a feature of "My church". It is a feature of the Lord's assembly, it is a feature of the people who are after His own heart; the recognition of His exceeding preciousness, His exceeding worth; that there is nothing too costly to lay at His feet. "*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious (is the preciousness)...*" (1 Pet. 2:7).

Now, that is very simple, and yet again it is a thing that draws forth the deep appreciation of the Lord Jesus. It is again a thing which gives feature to a very much beloved local assembly or church. In other words it is a thing which makes His assembly of great value to Him, that there His worth is recognized, and He is appreciated and appraised at His true value. That must mark the house of the Lord. It is a feature that must be developed more and more. Oh, how different this is from the merely formal church system! We can hardly say that the outstanding feature of that is a true heart-appreciation of the worth and of the value of the Lord Jesus. Where that appreciation is, you have the assembly; where it is not, whatever else you may have of ornate and elaborate presentation, you have not got the assembly; it is not the place of His delight.

The brokenness of the cruse brings out into expression the preciousness of the ointment. It is the 'vessel of fragile clay' which, being broken, makes possible the manifestation and expression of the glories of Christ. While that cruse is whole, strong, and sound in itself, something which you would look at and take account of in itself; something that would cause you to say: 'That is a beautiful vase, that is a wonderful piece of alabaster'; you are not getting at the secret. We may take account of men as splendid intellects, splendid men, wonderful preachers and so on but when the cruse is broken, shattered, then you get at the tabernacle secret of the glory of Christ.

26 JUL - God's Suffering for His Church to Come Into His Oneness

The Lord has strange ways. He deals with us like that. He must bring His instruments into oneness with Himself. There is a little phrase in the New Testament which runs like this: *"When once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah."* If that word means anything, it means that delay, in a case like that of Abram's, is not a pleasant thing for a man - not a thing that he would choose for himself. It would at least imply that if the Lord could have His way, He would perfect His purpose at once. Long-suffering, forbearance, patience, endurance - these things on God's part are not the things He would choose in carrying out His purposes, seeing all the suffering and the distress and the pain that there is. But He suffered... and suffered long, and His instruments must come into oneness with Him - oneness with His heart.

The point is that it lifts this thing on to a certain level. It is not that the Lord is just dealing with you and with me like a schoolmaster, trying to get something in us. It may be the Lord wants moral qualities developed in us - patience, long-suffering, and so on; there is no doubt that is true, but it is not just that. The Lord is saying, "I am not going to do this until you show signs of certain qualities." The Lord is lifting us right up on to the same level as Himself, bringing us into actual oneness with Himself, so that we have the same feeling toward others and toward the situation - toward the need that He has.

I believe that when the Lord can get a corporate cry in His Church which is His own cry, then His time has come. The Lord is not just waiting for a time. There is something bound up with that time, and He is seeking to produce in the heart of His instrument that which is in His own heart, so that it cries one cry with Him. The Church has to cry and it has to cry God's cry... and that one cry is not in the Church. There are many voices - conflicting voices; and by the agony of delay, and the agony of the growing impossibility of the situation, and the agony of the need for that which is of God as over against all this other, the Church will be brought to cry that cry. At midnight there shall be a cry! Now that is oneness with God in His time.

27 JUL - Carefreeness or Carelessness?

The Lord's attitude toward His Own is one of concern for them. He has His eye upon them; they are not out of His ken. Not only has He His eye upon them, but He has His ear open to them; and not only so, but He is taking definite care concerning them. *"...casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you"* (1 Pet. 5:7). *"Be careful to maintain good works"* (Titus 3:8).

On the one hand we are exhorted to be carefree because He careth for us and on the other hand we are told to be careful. We are exhorted to take care. When He says, *"In nothing be anxious"* (Phil. 4:6), or *"casting all your anxiety upon him,"* the Lord does not mean that you are to become careless, indifferent, to put the matter away as though it is nothing to do with you, that you have no place in it at all. There is a place where the Lord expects us to take care, to be careful (in the ordinary usage of the word among us), to recognize that we have responsibility, we have to be watchful, we have to come into the situation, we have to be careful in this way and in that.

In 1 Peter 3:12-14, Peter says that the Lord's attitude is one of solicitude for His Own. *"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears unto their supplication"*. While occupation must go on, many things must be attended to, there must be no distraction resulting from worry about it. *"Be not... anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"* (Matt. 6:31). Here is the same word again. What it amounts to seems to me to be this, that it is not just a psychological decision or resolution that we are going to be careless, we are going to be indifferent, we are not going to bother. It is to be positively an act of faith.

The anxiety usually comes in as to how things are going to turn out, what the issue is going to be. The right care is to do our part. The carefreeness is the result of committing the issue to the Lord and definitely taking the faith attitude that He will look after the outcome while we are looking after what is ours to look after. It is not just spineless optimism, it is definite faith - faith that refuses to be harassed and distracted by many things, by anything.

28 JUL - Knowing Christ by the Spirit

The Holy Spirit's way is to take Christ and open up Christ to the heart, and show that Christ is a heavenly order; not that the Epistles set forth as a manual a heavenly order, but that Christ is that order, and everything in the matter of order has to be kept immediately in relation to the living Person. If it becomes some "thing", then it becomes an earthly system; and you can make out of the Epistles a hundred different earthly systems all built upon the Epistles. They will support any number of different systems, different interpretations represented by Christian orders here, and the reason is that they have been divorced from the Person.

You see, beloved, there are numerous things, numerous subjects, themes, teachings. There is "the kingdom of God", there is "sanctification", there is "eternal life", there is "the victorious life", "the overcomer" or "the overcoming life", there is "the second coming of Christ". These are but a few subjects, themes, truths, as they are called, which have been taken up and developed out of the Scriptures and become things with which people have become very much occupied, and in which they are very interested as things. So certain people hive off around a sanctification teaching, and they are the sanctificationists, and it becomes an "ism". Others hive off, and they are bounded by the hedge of Second Adventism, the Lord's coming, prophecy, and all that. So you get groups like that. I want to say that would be utterly impossible if the Person of the Lord Jesus was dominant.

What is the kingdom of God? It is Christ. If you get right inside of the Gospels, you will find that the kingdom of God is Jesus Christ. If you are living in Christ, you are in the kingdom, and you know, as the Holy Spirit teaches you Christ, what the kingdom is in every detail. The kingdom is not some thing in the first place. The kingdom, when it becomes something universal, will simply be the expression and manifestation of Christ. That is all. You come to the kingdom in and through Christ; and the same is true of everything else.

29 JUL - All Things in Christ

What is sanctification? It is not a doctrine. It is not an 'it' at all. It is Christ. He is made unto us sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30). If you are in Christ and if the Holy Spirit is teaching you Christ, then you are knowing all about sanctification; and if He is not, you may have a theory and doctrine of sanctification, but it will separate you from other Christians and will be bringing any number of Christians into difficulties. Probably the teaching of sanctification as a thing has brought more Christians into difficulty than any other particular doctrine through making it a thing, instead of keeping Christ as our sanctification.

I am only saying this to try to explain... that it is in the School of Christ that we are to be found, where the Holy Spirit is not teaching us things; not Church doctrine, not sanctification, not adventism, not any thing or any number of things, but teaching us Christ. What is adventism? What is the coming of the Lord? Well, it is the coming of the Lord. And what is the coming of the Lord? Well, such a word as this will give us the key: *He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed* (2 Thess. 1:10). You see, it is the consummation of something that has been going on in an inward way. How then do I best know that the coming of the Lord draws nigh? Not best of all by prophetic signs, but by what is going on within the hearts of the Lord's people. That is the best sign of the times, namely, what the Spirit of God is doing in the people of God. But you are not interested in that. You would far sooner know what is going to happen between Germany and Russia, whether these two, after all, are going to make it up and become a great confederacy! How far does it get us? Where has all the talking about the revived Roman Empire got us? That is adventism as a thing. If only we keep close to Him Who is the sum of all truth, and move with Him and learn Him, we shall know the course of things. We shall know what is imminent. We shall have in our heart whisperings of preparation.

The best Advent preparation is to know the Lord. I am not saying that there is nothing in prophecy; don't misunderstand me. But I do know that there are multitudes of people who are simply engrossed in prophecy as a thing whose spiritual life counts for nothing, who really have no deep inward walk with the Lord. We have seen it so often.

30 JUL - Christianity Is Not a Teaching

Since Paul's day, so very much of Christian activity has been the furthering of a movement, the propagating of a teaching, and the furthering of the interests of an institution. It is not a movement, nor to establish a movement in the Earth and to get followers, adherents, members, support. It is not an institution, even though we might call that institution the church. The church has no existence in the thought of God apart from the revelation of Jesus Christ, and it is judged according to the measure in which Christ the Son of God's love is in evidence by its existence.

Let us be careful what we mean when we speak about "the testimony". We may have in our minds some arrangement of truth, and that truth couched in certain phraseology, form of words, and thus speak about "the testimony"; it is not the testimony in that sense. It is not a denomination, and it is not a "non-denomination", and it is not an "inter-denomination". It is not Christianity. It is not "the work" – oh, we are always talking about "the work": "How is the work getting on?" – We are giving ourselves to the work, we are interested in the work, we are out in the work. It is not a mission. It is Christ! "...*That I might preach Him.*" If that had remained central and preeminent, all these horrible disintegrating jealousies would never have had a chance. All the wretched mess that exists in the organization of Christianity today would never have come about. It is because something specific in itself, a movement, a mission, a teaching, a testimony, a fellowship, has taken the place of Christ. People have gone out to further that, to project that, to establish that. It would not be confessed; nevertheless it is true, that today it is not so much Christ that is our work.

Now beloved, an inward revelation is the cure of all that - am I saying too hard a thing, too sweeping a thing? - the existence of all that represents the absence of an adequate inward revelation of Christ. If Christ the Son of God's love is central and supreme in the heart of the believer, so much else goes down - it must go down. Controversies with God will divide, but those artificial things, those things resultant from man's activity and his projecting of himself, insinuating of himself into the interests of God, those things cannot abide where there is an adequate inward revelation of the Lord Jesus; they cannot be.

31 JUL - Taking In the Full Victory of Christ

It is necessary to carry the work of the cross to the full issue of Christ's absolute victory in the realm of all principality and power, in the realm of the authority of darkness. Forgiveness of sins is a great blessing, the atonement for our sins is a great blessing, and to be saved from hell at last and go to heaven is a great blessing. We would not minimize them for a moment or take from the greatness and grandeur of those things because of the infinite cost with which they were purchased for us, but I say again, it is necessary for us to carry the work of Christ through to its full issue, and its full issue lies in the realm of principalities and powers.

It lies in the realm of the authority of darkness, the jurisdiction of darkness. That is important for the sinner to know, that it is not only a matter of being forgiven his sins and saved from sin, but that the sinner should know that in salvation all the authority, the jurisdiction of principalities and powers, of the adversary, Satan himself, has been destroyed and broken, and out of that jurisdiction, that authority, that rightful hold of Satan, they have been rescued – rescued by Christ in His cross. It means that Satan has no more power because he has no more right. His power depends on his right, and his right is based upon the state of things in our hearts, and the cross deals with the state of things in our hearts and destroys or removes the ground of his right, and breaks his power.

Carry it right through. Now - all that is in Christ *for* us. Christ in Himself embodies His supremacy over the adversary because in Him there is no one of that ground that that adversary must have upon which to encamp and construct his rightful authority to hold in bondage. In Christ there is no such ground; Christ is in us when we believe, and the authority of Satan is broken because Christ is *in* us. Christ being *in* us - there is no ground for the jurisdiction of Satan.

AUGUST

1 AUG - Appropriating Christ

To be delivered not only from sin but also from the authority of Satan is a tremendous thing. *"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen..."* Rom.8:33, 34

What is the value of that? The accuser comes along and tries to lay a charge against us. What is our ground of answer? Oh, our ground of answer is this: *"It is Christ that died, and is also risen."* That is the way to answer the accusation of the enemy. Christ has triumphed over sin and over all the ground of Satan's authority. You and I can never meet the enemy in ourselves. He would win the argument every time. But if we present him with Christ, what can he do? *"The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me"* (John 14:30). These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. What power does the devil have? In Christ's death and resurrection all his power has been destroyed. *"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"* (Rom.8:33)

"...Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col.1:27). Do you follow that? That is the provision God has made, and if only we had a fuller, readier apprehension of Christ we should find that to be the way of victory. What is it that the Holy Spirit works upon in order to make the victory in us actual? It is not our struggles to be better. The Holy Spirit never helps us in a struggle to be better. We may struggle on forever, and die struggling, and the Holy Spirit will not help us if that is the way in which we think we are going to be either saved or sanctified.

What is it with which the Holy Spirit will cooperate? It is our faith apprehension and appropriation of Christ as our perfection, as our salvation. Stop looking at yourself and your own sin and get your eyes fixed upon the Lord Jesus as perfection for you to God, and from God to you, and as you take Him by faith – "Not what I am, O Lord, but what thou art" – "I in myself am bad. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing, but Lord, You are my salvation, You are my righteousness, You are my holiness, You are my sanctification, I hold on to You for all that" – the Holy Spirit makes that good to us. It is our appreciation of Christ that is the Holy Spirit's ground of activity; that is the way of deliverance.

2 AUG - The Stone at the Door

"They were saying: Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb? ...for it was exceeding great." Mark 16:3-6

In the first place, the stone symbolized the imminence of another world than this one. That young man in his white robe speaks of the intervention of another world. There is another world entirely, in close touch with this one, and mightier than it, acting in relation to the purposes of God centred in His Son, and which can never, on any account, be swallowed up in a tomb.

Further, that stone became the symbol of the mighty, triumphant power of life over death. We look for things to happen, and yet all the time the power of His risen life is silently working and solving so many problems. The fact is that we are going on today after many an experience of trial and helplessness; we have quietly been kept going on, and we are going on; we are not yet submerged and overwhelmed and put out. That is the miracle of His Divine life silently solving the problem, dealing with so many things that seem to say, *Death, an end!*

The power of His resurrection is the answer to many of our problems. We look for acts; He proceeds along the silent course of life, the mighty power of life overcoming death. *"It was not possible"* says the Word, *"that he should be holden of it (death)"* (Acts 2:24). They were saying, 'It is impossible for us to deal with this stone, this situation!' He was saying, 'It is not possible for death to hold Me'. There are two ways of viewing the impossible. Everything depends upon where you put the impossibility on the thing or on God. The things which are not possible with men are possible with God (Matt. 19:26). And He answers these impossible things in the normal way for it is the normal way. The abnormal would be by signs and wonders and extraordinary happenings - demonstrations to our senses - but the normal way in the Christian life is the way of the continuous transcendence of His life over the working of death. That is the miracle of Divine life working silently. Yours, then, is a life as is the life of everyone set in the presence of the great stone of death, spiritual death. We know it, and yet we are preserved alive spiritually and we go on. That is the great miracle. It is the miracle of every day. That is the testimony that God raised Him from the dead.

3 AUG - Gaining Ascendancy over the Stone

"They were saying: Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb? ...for it was exceeding great." Mark 16:3-6

It is the principle of the Cross again. He died for us - that is *the objective*. We died in Him that is *the subjective*. Here are two sides in spiritual experience. He keeps the balance of things. We have to have this balance wrought in us, and to be delivered from this tendency of allowing our problems to obscure the Lord, this inveterate habit of ours of viewing the position merely objectively instead of saying, 'What does the Lord want to teach us about this? What does He want to do in us in this matter? There is something He is after in us.' He has something to do *in* us before He can do it *for* us.

How often we have found that when we have come to a new position with the Lord, when the thing has been done in us, then there has been outward movement. So the mention of the subjective exercise suggests that we have to take this matter to our own hearts as something which requires a change in us. I am quite sure that is how they must have felt when they were able to sit down and go over it all again. 'We were terribly obsessed with our problem and were asking who could solve it for us. The Lord has made us to see that we must be inwardly different about these things, we must have a position of faith, of rest, over them, we must believe God.' We must gain inward ascendancy over the stone before there is any ascendancy to be known over it outwardly. The stone is really not outside of us in the first place. It is inside; it is in our faith, it is in our spirit, it is in our minds.

When the Lord's interests have brought us into such a relationship with Him that we can say there is no stone so big to be removed, no problem so great for solving, no difficulty so intense, but the Lord will do what is necessary for His Son's sake when we have come to a position like that, the Lord is free to do a lot of things very quietly. As we say, they just 'happen'. Sometimes He may bring us into the presence of the working of His power that is manifestly terrific, but not often and certainly not always. For faith, it is more like this: there is such power at work as to make possible the setting aside of the obstacle very quietly, so that we afterward wonder *"And they were amazed"*. And the angel said, *"Be not amazed"*. It is good to have amazement, but let us recognize that a certain amount of our amazement is because we have not sufficient faith.

4 AUG - Christian Maturity Comes With His Lordship

What is spiritual maturity? What is it to go on in the Lord? I fear we have got mixed ideas about this. Many think that spiritual maturity is a more comprehensive knowledge of Christian doctrine, a larger grasp of scriptural truth, a wider expanse of the knowledge of the things of God; and many such features are recorded as marks of growth, development, spiritual maturity. Beloved, it is nothing of the kind. The hallmark of true spiritual development and maturity is this: that we have grown so much less and the Lord Jesus has grown so much more. The mature soul is one who is small in his or her own eyes, but in whose eyes the Lord Jesus is great. That is growth. We may know a very great deal, have a wonderful grasp of doctrine, of teaching, of truth, even of the Scriptures, and yet be spiritually very small, very immature, very childish. (There is all the difference between being childish and childlike.) Real spiritual growth is just this: I decrease, He increases. It is the Lord Jesus becoming more. You can test spiritual growth by that.

In the book of the Acts, they did not first of all preach Jesus as Savior. They preached Him as Lord. You see, that carried with it of necessity the Savior-hood. He must be the Christ, He must be the Savior, He must be the Son of God. All THAT is involved if He is Lord now; and if they accepted and acknowledged Him as Lord, well, that included His Savior-hood, but the Savior-hood was something subsidiary to the Lordship.

After all, the Savior-hood of Christ is but a recovering thing in relation to His Lordship. The Lordship was the eternal intention of God concerning Him. The Savior-hood is in order to get back to the Lordship, to lead on to the recovery of the Lordship. He can never be actually Lord until He has saved the inheritance of which He is the eternally designated Lord; but when He is Lord, it means that He is Savior, He HAS redeemed. The Lordship is more than the Savior-hood. And so, when you come on to God's SUPREME ground "*hath made him a Prince and a Savior*" then the way is open for God to take you right on, beyond conversion, beyond the infant stage of just being born again, on to '*growing up into Him in all things*', on to the fullness of Christ. So they put the full testimony there, where all the rest was included, and thus there was a wide open way for all God's intention. Wherever you look in the Scriptures, you find that it is Lordship which is the secret of fullness.

5 AUG - The Supreme Issue

The Philippian letter begins with Paul's statement, *"For to me to live is Christ"*, and then goes on to express his ambition to know the Lord more and more, with his determination to pursue that knowledge as a coveted prize. If we desire to know what is meant by gaining Christ, we have to turn to Romans 8:29 where we find that God's intention is that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. This being conformed is gaining Christ, this is the prize; it involves an attaining unto the fullness of Christ in moral perfection, which is to be the glory in which God's sons will be manifested. It is simply this, that to come to be morally and spiritually one with Christ in His place of exaltation is the goal and prize of the Christian life. We do well to keep in view this glorious end, *"the manifestation of the sons of God"*.

When Paul spoke of gaining Christ and of reaching out for the prize, he was expressing his earnest longing to be conformed to the image of God's Son. This is something which is the issue of salvation, it is God's end in salvation, but it is clearly something which needs to be pursued. It is plain that we do not have to win salvation, and we certainly do not have to suffer the loss of all things to be saved. We are saved by faith, not by works; salvation is not a prize to be won, not something for which we must reach forward, but a present, a free gift. Beyond this, however, Paul wrote that he counted all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. If the power of the same Spirit is working in us, this will surely produce the same effect of making us realize how little is the worth of everything else compared with the great prize of Christ.

It is interesting to compare Mark 10 with Philipians 3, as each passage tells of a young man and his momentous decision. The two men were very similar in many respects; they were both rich rulers, men of high standing socially, intellectually, morally and religiously among their own people. Of the one it had to be said *"One thing thou lackest"*, while the other could affirm *"One thing I do"*. The nameless young man turned away from Christ; he did so sorrowfully but nevertheless he did it, and the reason was that he was not prepared to part with his great possessions. Paul had great possessions also, but they lost all their attractiveness in the light of the vision which he had of Christ; to him it was the alternative of earthly prizes or the one great heavenly prize, and he gladly made his choice of the latter.

6 AUG - Marks of Spiritual Maturity

"And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? Know ye not that such a man as I can indeed divine?" Gen 44:15

Here is "the man". What are the features of this man? This is a man of stature. He is a big man, he is a great man. This man is marked by great dignity. That is patent; it lies on the surface of the story. These brothers of his are all aware of the dignity of this man. This man is marked by discernment *"Know ye not that such a man as I can indeed divine?"* You remember that that was how Joseph got to his position. Pharaoh had his dream, and Joseph was the only one who could interpret, and the verdict was that the Spirit of God was in him. He could discern, he had power of *discernment* and *interpretation*. And he had *authority*. Everything is in this man's hands. He has them completely in his hands. Those three things are the characteristics of Joseph - dignity, discernment, authority.

That is stature. Those are the things that mark spiritual full-growth. We could spend a lot of time on that. In one who has spiritual dignity there is nothing mean, nothing contemptible, nothing small, nothing petty; he is one who has to be recognized as a man of stature, as one who counts for something. The man who has discernment is one who can see through beyond his own nose, who is far-seeing, 'in-seeing', who has what we call vision; he is a man who has a secret knowledge of the meaning of things. And the possession of spiritual authority means that there is something about that man or woman which is more than themselves. They themselves, perhaps, would not command much respect and certainly would not command obedience, but there is something about them that you have to take account of. They have history with God. That gives them something that makes itself known and felt in the presence of other people. They have to say, 'They know what they are talking about, you cannot just twist them round your finger; they know where they stand; there is something about them that you are compelled to recognize, acknowledge and bow to'. That is spiritual authority. Let us not interpret these things physically - I was going to say literally. These are spiritual factors, spiritual features, these are the marks of spiritual growth; and here is a big man, a great man, who has reached full stature.

Are not these the features of Christ? Look at Him again. Is there not dignity about Him? There is nothing small, nothing petty, nothing mean or contemptible about Christ. There is dignity right the way through. There is insight, discernment, perception, vision, knowledge beyond the ordinary. As for authority, He was someone to be reckoned with, even in the day of His humiliation.

7 AUG - Do You Yearn for Spiritual Growth?

Do you have a tremendous concern for reproduction and increase? That is the secret of spiritual full-growth, a real and mighty and triumphant concern for increase and reproduction. Whether it be the Church as a whole or a local company or an individual believer, spiritual growth, enlargement, 'greatness' will depend upon a deep concern for reproduction. It used to be said, and it is still said in some circles, that a non-missionary church is a dead church, it never grows; and there is much truth in that. Where there is no concern for reproduction, for the salvation of souls, for the expansion of the church, there is no growth. The kind of spirit that does the plowing, the sowing, the hard work, the grind; that endures, that exercises patience and courage against adversity and disappointment, and persists because it believes that this thing can be and should be, because the Lord of resurrection dictates it; that kind of spirit is going to lead to much enlargement, spiritually, of the individual, the local church, and the whole Church. So Isaac is not only the embodiment, but the expression of the power of resurrection, and that is shown by this great concern for increase.

Are you concerned for spiritual increase, or are you just sitting passively, indifferently, a passenger, a parasite, drawing everything to yourself and giving nothing? This thing must be a hundredfold; nothing less than that can really mark the full blessing of God - a hundredfold in me and in others. Oh, how that would correct a great deal of our attitude toward others. Our attitude is far too often one that would limit other people's spiritual life. We criticize, we talk about them, we point out their faults; what is going on? How do we use our tongues about the Lord's people and His servants? What is going on in our homes in that matter? If it really did touch those people of God directly, would it be to their enlargement, or be to their undoing or their limitation? What is our attitude? Are we true Isaacs in this, that we are concerned for their growth, for their increase, and are not going to do anything, by lip or hand or any other way, that would hinder the spiritual growth of other people, whether individuals or the Church?

It is a very pertinent thing, this. You may take it as a settled thing that if you are using your tongue detrimentally toward the people of God, you are cutting across your own spiritual growth; you are dwarfing your own spiritual stature. These people are little people, contemptible people; they are of small spiritual stature. Oh, may we grow up! And we shall grow up as we have a heart enlarged for spiritual increase.

8 AUG - Do You Think You Are Meek and Humble?

"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth." Numbers 12:3

What a verdict! *"ABOVE all men"*; head and shoulders above all other men! And how was he head and shoulders above all other men? It says it was in meekness, a tremendous summing up of a man's life! You could say about Moses that he was great in many respects, very great, but the Bible does not make a lot of his greatness in other respects. The Bible passes its verdict upon him that he was the meekest man upon the earth. See God's estimate of greatness, what God calls greatness: *meekness*. We need not stay with it.

What is it? Well, meekness is what he thought of himself; it is what a man is in himself and toward himself. When Moses was alone and when Moses had any thought about himself at all, those thoughts about himself were very poor. He never, when thinking about himself, recognized that there was any reason why he should assert himself, that there was any ground on which he could stand up for his rights or could be something; any reason why they ought to take account of what he was in his own inner life. There was none of that - it was the other way. His thoughts about himself were very small thoughts, and he was only in his position because he had great thoughts of God and little thoughts about himself. That is all we need say. That is Meekness. It works, of course, in many ways, it comes out in many ways; but that is the heart of the matter, what we are in our own eyes about ourselves, and therefore how we behave.

Moses was not always meek, as we know from his early life in Egypt; but, under the hand of God, his weakest point became his strongest.

Now look at the Lord Jesus. There did come a Man on the earth greater than Moses, and His greatness was superior greatness even to that of Moses. He was on the same ground. *"I am meek and lowly in heart"*, He said; *"learn of Me"* (Matt. 11:29). That is the way to grow. Pride is one of the most ruinous things in the realm of spiritual growth.

9 AUG - The Example of Mordecai

"Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went forth throughout all the provinces; for the man Mordecai waxed greater and greater." Esther 9:4

"The man... waxed greater and greater." You see how this little phrase "the man" in every connection is related to stature, to growth, to greatness. "The man Mordecai waxed and greater." Why? What was the secret of his greatness? Why did God sovereignly act to bring that man right up, in that startling way, from sitting at the door as a kind of eavesdropper and beggar, bring him up and up and up, until at last this could be said of him: "the man Mordecai waxed greater and greater"?

Why? There is only one reason. Here was a man who at any cost was devoted to the interests of the Lord's people and to the Lord's testimony as vested in the Lord's people. That is the answer. You know the story of Mordecai and of Esther. Here is a man whose whole story is summed up in this deep, overwhelming concern for the Lord's people, because they embodied the Lord's testimony. We need, of course, to go over that whole ground of how Israel, chosen of God, was chosen as a people in the earth to be the vessel of His testimony, and here these people are at the point of being wiped out to the last child by this cunning, evil work, the devil-inspired device of Haman, *"this wicked Haman"*, the Agagite. This man Mordecai set himself right in the full tide and flood of that iniquity, which was nothing less than the destruction of the life of the people of God in order to carry away the Lord's testimony from the earth. He set himself, and the tide broke on him, and God honoured him and raised him up and saw to it that he became great. His greatness was not the mere turn of fortune in his favour. It was because of what God was in him; and it is ever like that. Whatever other people try to do, however much they try to keep us down and under and out, spiritual greatness will be brought about by the Lord in us, if only we have this overwhelming concern for His interests in His people.

These are the features of greatness, because they are the features of Christ, and it is by these things that we come to the full stature of *"a man in Christ"*. How important it is for us to recognize that all this is to be true in us as men and women not as glorified saints hereafter, and certainly not as angels, but as men and women on this earth now, as human beings down here. How wonderful to know that it can commence and develop right away, even here and now, through the grace of God.

10 AUG - The Battle Over Life

All spiritual progress, all increase of spiritual measure, came to the Lord's people along the line of *battle*; and it is still like that. But what is the focal point of this whole contest, this whole battle? Upon what does it all turn? Just one thing: *life*. It is the battle over *life*. Make no mistake about it; that is the issue upon which the enemy is focusing all his attention. In all his countless schemes, of neutralizing and putting out of the fight, his objective is that life against which he moved at the beginning. His whole success will depend upon *death*. If he can bring death in, in any form whatever, he has succeeded; and on the other hand, the whole triumph of the Lord's people is in the one connection of life.

We have said that all spiritual progress is a matter of knowing Him ever more in the power of His resurrection. Every fresh step in spiritual progress comes out of a crisis, and that crisis is one in which a fresh knowledge of the power of His resurrection is the only thing for our salvation. That is a very hopeful thing. If today you and I are more conscious than ever, both personally and collectively, of the need of a new, mighty incoming of the power of His resurrection, it may be that the Lord has precipitated a crisis in order that there shall be more of that Divine life than ever.

It has always been like that. Israel's coming out to be the Lord's people, with the inheritance in view, was through a crisis of death and resurrection; their moving into the Land, into the inheritance, was on another crisis of death and resurrection. All progress, all increase, is in this battle between death and life, life and death.

11 AUG - Eternal Life: The Christian Battle Ground

Now, we know that eternal life is a gift in response to faith in the Lord Jesus. It is a gift, but that is not the end of the story. When it has been given, it becomes the battleground for the rest of the experience of the Christian; right through to the end, that very life is the battleground of all true Christians. If it can by any means be neutralized, made inoperative, arrested, Satan will do it; that is his object. On the other hand, the Lord's object is to make us, with Paul, *'know Him, and the power of His resurrection'*, in ever greater fullness. If ever a man knew the power of His resurrection, it was Paul, through many, many deadly conflicts, terrible battles and deep experiences; and yet, in his last writings, right at the end of his long, full experience of knowing resurrection upon resurrection, he still says: *'That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection'* (Phil. 3:10). It is as much as to say: 'I don't know all that there is to know of that yet. I know a lot, but there is much more to know of that yet.'

And to Timothy, much about the same time, Paul writes: *"Lay hold on the life eternal."* That is where I would put the emphasis. Do not just passively rest upon the fact that through faith in Jesus Christ you have eternal life. Remember that, from day to day, that life is to conquer; it is to be the basis of your very survival, it is to be the very means of your daily overcoming. It has to be the ground of your physical life, as well as your spiritual life: for body, you must lay hold on that life; for victory, you must lay hold on that life. Would that we knew more about this in our prayer gatherings, really laying hold for victory, laying hold for the overthrow of the enemy; this positive taking hold, in spirit, of life. This is the battle; this is the very nature of things. In all this terrible welter in which we find ourselves, we have not, on the one hand, to accept it as inevitable, things being as they are; nor, on the other hand, to have a merely passive faith that, in the end, the Lord will triumph. Between those two, there is all this in the Word of God about our being positive, about our laying hold; about our attitude on the one side, of refusing; on the other side, of laying hold of God's end.

The Lord save our fighting spirit, and *'teach our hands to war, our fingers to fight!'* (Ps. 144:1)

12 AUG - Understanding the Times

What a lot really does hang upon spiritual understanding and intelligence! How essential it is for the Lord's people, in a day of crisis and perplexity, difficulty and confusion, to have somewhere, by some means, spiritual understanding! It was a great thing in Israel's history that the men of Issachar had *"understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do"* (1 Chronicles 12:32).

Think of those men on the Emmaus road. What a position and a state they were in! Their world had collapsed and everything had gone until He opened their eyes and they understood the scriptures. A new world was recovered instantly, and a new hope and prospect were saved by spiritual understanding. Oh, the tremendous value and importance of spiritual understanding! However, let us be quite clear as to what it is and what it is not.

Of course, it is not worldly wisdom and acute, natural, intellectual acumen. In this Gospel by Matthew the people who are most in evidence are the teachers and rulers of Israel, the scribes and Pharisees, the people who knew it all and gave the interpretation and explanation of everything. They are in the forefront of the scene on the stage here, but later Paul said about them that theirs was the wisdom of men, not the wisdom of God, *"which none of the rulers of this world knoweth: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"* (1 Corinthians 2:8). It was the wisdom of this world that crucified the Son of God. So spiritual understanding is not that!

It is not that we have a great and wonderful religious tradition with all the oracles handed down to us, and we stand possessed of the great inheritance of religion. That is not spiritual understanding! It is quite evident that you can have all that and still go wrong. There was a man in the New Testament who said that he had everything along that line, and yet he was the most vehement antagonist of Jesus of Nazareth and all who were of that way. He pursued them unto distant cities, hauled men and women to prison yet he was a man with the largest tradition. So spiritual understanding is not that! Further, it is not a wealth of truth and Christian teaching. Again, it is possible to have that and not have spiritual understanding.

13 AUG - Spiritual Understanding

Spiritual understanding, to begin with, is the combination of two things. First of all, it is the result of the direct action of the Spirit of God upon the spirit of man. By nature our spirit is in death, and the Spirit of God acts to raise it from the dead and bring it into life. And it is our spirit which is the organ of spiritual understanding. If we are normal, we have a natural understanding, but by nature we do not possess this faculty, this organ of spiritual understanding. It is dead, or dormant, until the Spirit of God acts upon it, and then we are aware that we have a new faculty, a faculty of discrimination. We know from that moment, without being told anything about it, what we should do and what we should not do, what is right and what is wrong. It is a new faculty, but that faculty is indwelt and actuated by the Spirit of God, and is not acting independently. *"The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God"* (Romans 8:16).

Therefore the combination of these two things, the resurrection into life of our own spirit and becoming indwelt by the Spirit of God, constitutes the organ and function of spiritual understanding. It begins in simple ways, but education in the Christian life proceeds upon that basis, and that alone.

There is a link formed by this action of the Holy Spirit between knowledge and conscience. Note that, for it is a very important thing. There is a link between knowledge and conscience, which is a new conscience or consciousness. That explains the tragedy of many Christian lives. They have a lot of knowledge without any conscience about it. It is not a knowledge which produces a consciousness of life, and so there is inconsistency and contradiction. They know the teaching, the doctrine, the truth and what the Word of God says, but there is no deep exercise in their hearts that gives them, on the one side, a bad time for any inconsistency and, on the other side, great joy in realizing that they are being well-pleasing unto the Lord. This link, you see, is what is meant by spiritual understanding. 'I KNOW that that is mere knowledge, information, or truth, but I UNDERSTAND when the thing affects me, when it touches my life, and when it brings me up short on matters.' That is spiritual understanding.

14 AUG - Taking His Word Seriously

"That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."

Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, "You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; For the heart of this people has become dull, With their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Otherwise they would see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them."

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.

And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

"Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes."

Matthew 13:1-9, 11, 14-15, 19, 23, 51

In this chapter all those people who received the Word, received the ministry of the sower and the seed, but with three parts of them it came to nothing in the end. They had the word, they had the sower as much as anyone, and they had Christ. He was present, and they had the word of the Lord. All the potentialities of the Lord's presence, His work and His Word were with them and were there for everyone. It was not that He gave more lavishly to some than to others. They all had the same possibilities, but only a fourth part showed anything for it, and the Lord said: 'There is one reason only. The three classes failed in the end because they had no spiritual understanding. They had the word, the Lord and everything, but they might just as well have never had them for

all the value that accrued. The one class showed a return, greater measures, because they had spiritual understanding.' What did it mean? Well, surely it just meant that these people laid the word to heart. They discerned and recognized something of the significance, the meaning, the importance and the destiny that were bound up with the word.

Dear friends, these are not the words, nor is this just teaching. The Lord Jesus was not just broadcasting ideas and saying: 'You can take it or leave it.' There is something here that is going to affect us in relation to the ultimate issue of the Kingdom of Heaven.

A seriousness of attitude is the beginning of understanding. It is put like this in the Old Testament: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"* (Proverbs 9:10). What is the fear of the Lord? It is taking Him and His word really seriously. Anything that comes from the Lord is of tremendous consequence, and that is the beginning of spiritual understanding.

We need to pray that among the children of God there may be an increase of spiritual understanding in the knowledge of Him, and we need to remind ourselves that the essentials to such an understanding are humility, brokenness and singleness of heart.

15 AUG - The Endurance of the Word

Matthew 13:1-9, 11, 14-15, 19, 23, 51 (see 14 AUG)

Spiritual understanding means that that which comes from the Lord finds a place for itself in us. There is a receptivity in the heart. In the first scattering of the seed, the birds of the air found it an easy prey because of a lack of receptivity. It just stayed on the outside, on the surface, and did not enter in at all. And so it was stolen. Spiritual understanding means that we draw the word in, take it in and apply ourselves to it. There is a receptivity about us.

In the next place, spiritual understanding means an endurance of and through what the Lord gives. The life of the seed on the rocky ground was short, so the history of that bit of the work of God was very short-lived. There was no real endurance. Spiritual understanding is the basis and the means of the spiritual endurance of the work of God in our hearts and in our lives. That is very clear and, I think, very simple. It is so possible, as we know, to hear it all and, in a way, know it all. Then, when the real test is applied, things begin to get difficult, the sun rises with scorching heat, and we get into the fires, the adversities and the suffering; all our knowledge means nothing. All that we have heard and all that has come to us just stands for nothing, and our spiritual history goes. I am afraid that is how it is with many; there is no endurance through the scorching sun and the fires.

Then, what about this that fell among thorns? *"And the thorns grew up, and choked them."* Spiritual understanding has a wonderful power to set up in us a resistance to this world and its fires, but there was no resistance here. The thorns sprang up and choked the seed. They were not challenged and subdued. The Lord's explanation shows that there was no resistance because there was no spiritual understanding, no real spiritual apprehension. Spiritual understanding means depth, and that brings us to the fourth class. Everything depends upon our having depth.

Oh, for more of this spiritual understanding that has these results! First a receptivity, which means that we embrace the truth. Then an endurance against all adversity and temptation. Then a resistance to everything that comes to us which is not true or right; and finally a depth that lays hold and reproduces.

16 AUG - The Call for Obedience to His Word

Spiritual understanding is shown quite clearly in the Word to be essential to a sound beginning in the Christian life. Why is it that such a large proportion of those who seem to make a good beginning do not go on? They fall away and you cannot find them after a little while. Why? Because they did not have a beginning in understanding what all this is about, what it means, what it implies and what it involves. It was an appeal on the outside, perhaps a very powerful one and so they made their answer, but where are they after a little while? Spiritual understanding, says the Lord Jesus here, is the answer to that. Be very sure that your converts understand! Do not be satisfied with any light and superficial spiritual catch phrases, but seek to get them truly grounded in the Word of God and rooted in OBEDIENCE TO THAT WORD.

The unproductive soils (Mathew 13), by their very contrast, illustrate for us the essentials of a spirit of understanding. The opposite of the hardened ground is the heart which is ready to receive with meekness the seed which is sown in it. Always the Lord requires of His children that they have a teachable spirit. Those who are self-assured and independent give little opportunity for the Word to do its cleansing and transforming work. So the first requisite for an understanding heart is simple dependence and a genuine humility, with a willingness to abandon one's own conceits in order to allow God to do His own work of correcting and reshaping according to His will.

Then there is the stony ground, the opposite of which is surely a heart softened and broken under the hand of God. This is not natural to any of us, for even the weakest nature can be strong and stubborn in its unwillingness to submit to the inward working of the Word. Even though the experience may be painful to the flesh, it is essential that our own strength and self-esteem should be set aside to make room for God. Without such experiences of being broken down and opened up by the working of the Cross it is not possible to become spiritually sensitive to the will of God.

Finally, it is essential to be single-minded if we are really to understand the ways of God. Whether the "thorns" be ugly or whether they be seemingly beautiful, if they are rivals to God's speaking then they must not be tolerated. Spiritual understanding means the ruthless setting aside of lesser things in order to make room for God.

17 AUG - The Consciousness to Which a Believer Comes

The calling of believers is said to be in accordance with His (God's) eternal purpose. What is that? The eternal purpose is Christ inheriting all things; so that our being called, our hearing the Call, is a first work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ coming into His inheritance, according to something laid down with the foundation of the world. That makes conversion something very much bigger than just being saved, does it not? It is not just a matter of becoming a Christian. There is this immense background to our being called. The Holy Spirit has, so to speak, 'got to work' in relation to the appointed Heir of all things; you and I are coming under the hand of the Holy Spirit as a part of that inheritance. Our very calling in grace is according to that purpose, and our calling therefore is something tremendous. It is not only our calling. The beginning of our Christian life is not something merely incidental. It is fundamental to the whole scheme of things in relation to the Lord Jesus. I think it is true to the experience of most, if not all, of those who respond to the Spirit's influence and call, that, following that response, there comes into being, there settles down within, a sense of belonging, of being owned, possessed. We feel: 'I know now where I belong; this is really where I belong. I felt that I did not belong to anything or anybody before, but now I know I belong, and to Whom I belong.' It is a sense of being taken into possession. It is a matter of ownership.

That is why there springs immediately from the lips of those who have responded to the Spirit the word 'Father'. Paul says to the Galatians that the Spirit of God has been put into our hearts, and thereby we cry '*Abba, Father!*': and what does 'Father' mean if it does not mean belonging? And again, 'Lord': the first ejaculation of Paul after his apprehending was 'Lord'. We love that word, but we did not always love the idea of being 'lorded'. It is foreign to human nature to be lorded over.

'Master' - that word is music to the Christian, as applied to the Lord Jesus; but how the natural man hates the idea of 'master'!

This is the consciousness that comes in. We are not compelled or forced; it is spontaneous. The Spirit has brought us home, brought us into our rightful ownership. This is how it ought to be. For that was all arranged long, long before we had a being. We belong to Somebody, we are Somebody's, that is where we belong.

18 AUG - The Knowledge of Christ is the Key

There is nothing which comes within the compass of the life of the Christian which does not depend upon the knowledge of Christ. But that knowledge is a thing which will never be exhausted here, however long we live, and however rapidly we grow. We shall never overtake the finality of that knowledge. That is why an apostle, at the end of his life, still more than at any other time in all his history, gave expression to the deepest desire and longing of his heart as being to *'know Christ'* (Phil. 3:10). We may say that for every increase in spiritual life, spiritual strength, spiritual effectiveness, spiritual usefulness to the Lord, some further measure of the knowledge of Christ is essential. We increase by this knowledge; we progress by this knowledge; we are more for the Lord in accordance with the living knowledge of the Lord Jesus which is coming to us.

This knowledge is essentially a spiritual thing. It is a knowledge which is altogether closed to any capacity or ability or faculty, save that of the spirit. The measure in which we represent the Divine thought and fulfil the Divine purpose, will be the measure in which we are learning Christ after the Spirit.

That may represent one of two things for different people. It may represent limitation for those who have learned Christ other than after the Spirit; who, therefore, have to unlearn a good deal more than others, before they can learn. On the other hand, it may mean everything to those whose knowledge of the Lord is by way of an absolutely new beginning.

This kind of knowledge marks a difference between Paul and the other apostles. They had had a considerable knowledge of Christ which was historical, which was earthly. Paul came from the beginning into his practical knowledge of Christ on a heavenly level. Right at the very commencement of his Christian life, his was a spiritual knowledge of Christ. Every fragment from that point onward was a spiritual knowledge of Christ, and he jealously saw to it that it remained so. He positively refused to go to Jerusalem to get his knowledge of Christ from those who were apostles before him. He maintained stolidly his position that Christ, having revealed himself to him, COULD and WOULD reveal Himself in the same way. Of course, the other apostles came into that spiritual knowledge later, but Paul had no other in experience.

19 AUG - Do You Know About Christ or Know Of Christ?

There is all the difference between a very large knowledge ABOUT Christ, and the smallest measure of the knowledge OF Christ. One may be immense in its range; the other may be very small in its measure. And yet the small thing may count for infinitely more than the immensity of the other.

The knowledge of Christ in a spiritual way is basic to everything in our lives as the Lord's children. As we go on, and the Holy Spirit begins to unveil Christ in our hearts, then we know how true this is. We know that it is that which gives reality to the spiritual life, makes it a very real thing. It is that which establishes us, so that, while the adversities might turn us away from a creed, a doctrine, an accepted position, a profession of relationship, nothing can turn us away from a spiritual knowledge. Spiritual knowledge is a part of our being, and we can never separate ourselves from that. That is reality! Nothing less than that could have accounted for Paul's going through to the end, when he saw his life's work going to pieces about him. The very assemblies for which he had so to speak poured out his lifeblood, forsook him at last, when all they in Asia turned away from him. There is nothing to account for his remaining, not only loyal to the Lord, but triumphant to the last, save the fact that he knew the Lord in a spiritual way. Reality is found there. And every other virtue and value lies in the same direction. It is what Christ is, being progressively disclosed to our hearts.

The day will come when most of us will be tested on this very thing, and under given tests the one thing that will become clear will be that a very great deal of our knowledge of the Lord was not knowledge after the Spirit, but knowledge which we had obtained by reason perhaps of having been born and brought up in Christian families, instructed from infancy; knowledge which we had obtained by reading good books, devotional literature; knowledge perhaps by all the 'providences', as we call them. They carried us through to a right place the providences of birth and upbringing and association. And yet, unless they go further than that, the time will come when it will be proved that they lack the essential element in our relationship to the Lord. And from time to time the Lord does allow His winds of adversity to blow, He does take His winnowing fan and throw everything up into the air, and cause the wind to pass through, just to find how much there is of solid grain that will fall and remain uninfluenced by the wind, and just how much of the chaff will be carried away.

20 AUG - Imparting Christ to Others

Ministry, (speaking now of service) is not telling out truths. A good many people have thought that ministry is preaching sermons, giving addresses, or talking Christian doctrine. That is not ministry. If that were ministry this world ought to have been turned inside-out and upside-down a thousand times over. If that were ministry, then every weekend ought to see this world revolutionized with the amount of preaching that is going on. Ministry is not talking even the most orthodox doctrine. Service is not giving out by word of mouth things which may be perfectly true about Christ. Ministry is bringing Christ and imparting Christ. It is ministering Christ. It is communicating Christ. There is all the difference between giving addresses and preaching sermons, and communicating Christ. The measure of the success of our ministry is the measure in which other people come to realize that they have had Christ ministered to them, and that they are the richer spiritually. That is not just mental gratification, intellectual satisfaction, but something deep down in the innermost being, which is Christ. The Apostle would put it this way: *"As ye received Christ, so walk in him..."* Not: 'As ye heard about Christ'; but: *"As ye received Christ..."*

A ministry like that is usually costly, and when we speak about ministry let no one think that that belongs to a certain class. We are all to minister. The business of every child of God is to communicate Christ to others; and, in so far as you can, by a simple word, communicate Christ, you are a minister of Christ. The effect of our being here on this earth as the Lord's should be that others should say: 'I received something of the Lord through that one; I came into possession of something more of Christ through such-and-such.'

There will be one, and only one, hope for God's people: their knowledge of Him in Christ... and the power of His resurrection as a present spiritual reality. Not their activities, enthusiasms, organizations, enterprises, creeds, "churches," orthodoxy, etc., but HIMSELF. That time, which is now coming upon us though imperceptible to so many who are preoccupied with plans and programs will make manifest the principle of the "one Body," for each of the Lord's children will feel keenly the need of the fellowship of another, no matter of what connection, so long as that other knows Him.

21 AUG - Is Your Knowledge of Christ Based on Friendship?

"No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you." John 15:15

Here is a knowledge from the Father through the Son which is based upon this element which is called 'friendship'. *"I have called you friends"*. Surely that means that we have to come into a relationship with the Lord Jesus of a very deep, inward character of a very confidential nature, shall we say. There is something about that relationship which speaks of understanding born of the very closest communion. Someone may say to you about a friend of yours, that they said a certain thing or that they did a certain thing, and your rejoinder would be: 'No! I am quite sure that so-and-so never said that or did that. I know them too well. I know that they would not say or do a thing like that.'

There you have touched the inner meaning of friendship. It is a knowledge which understands quite well what would be expected and not expected, what could come from that direction and what could not come from that direction. But that is a knowledge which is a deep, an inside knowledge. You can never get that by observation; you can never come to that position by simply listening, or studying; you have to know, and when you know by communion, by living in touch with that one, you know instinctively what to expect and what not to expect. The Lord Jesus says that He takes the disciples into that relationship with Himself, and on that basis He opens His heart; that all things that He had heard from the Father He made known unto them, because of the relationship. *"I have called you friends..."*

What is the point of saying such things? You and I are not going to get the real knowledge of Christ by listening to addresses, by attending meetings. The value lies in the fact that we go away with what is said, into the presence of the Lord, having a background relationship with Him. *Things* may be true, and of the greatest value as things for our spiritual help, but we have to work those things out in the secret with the Lord. Otherwise we shall be 'meeting-mongers'; we shall simply be attending meetings and getting an accumulation of knowledge. The real value will lie in the time which we spend with the Lord on these things: it will be personal communion with the Lord in the secret place; it will be what is going on deep down in our hearts, between ourselves and the Lord. This knowledge is on the ground of what the Lord Jesus calls 'friendship'.

22 AUG - What is Keeping You Out of His Fullness?

Why was it that at the beginning there were such virile converts, marked from the outset by such a large measure of Christ? Why was it that then things happened on such a large and effective scale within the compass of a few days? Why was it that the churches grew and the Lord added unto them those who were being saved? Why could it be that in one day three thousand, and soon after as many again, were added? Why, in the course of one man's lifetime, could the greater part of the then known world be evangelized and churches be established everywhere, and that upon a large measure of spiritual light and life? Why?

If you think about it, I am quite sure that you will be convinced that the answer is to be found in the testimony, the declaration born out of something which had happened and that testimony was to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They proclaimed Him as Lord. *"He is Lord of all."* The Lordship of Jesus Christ is the secret of fullness, and we never really move into the fullness of Christ until He is Lord.

I suppose almost any Christian, any really born-again child of God, would be willing to subscribe to the objective fact and say, *"Jesus Christ is Lord"*! But why, then, this state of things? Either what I am saying is entirely untrue, and the Lordship of Christ does not lead to His fullness, or else it means something more than objective truth; and I think the latter is the case. The real trouble is that in so many of His own He is not Lord. He may be Saviour, but He is not Lord. The Lordship of Christ means in us a very deep and very drastic work. It means the overthrowing of every other lordship.

But the other lordships may not be in the form of outward things. The other lordships may be in our own wills. Just that strong-mindedness of ours may be the thing which occupies the throne in the place of Christ. The Lord Jesus is kept out of His place as Lord in us because of the very strength of our own natures, our desires, our affections, our likes and our dislikes, and all that realm of our human feelings. There may be that in our make-up which is thwarting and frustrating His Lordship and in so doing is just keeping us out of His fullness.

23 AUG - Lordship Is the Key to Fullness

You look at Israel's history. While in the wilderness for forty years, the one thing that was the issue being fought out was the Lordship of God: they were fighting with that matter of absolute submission and subjection to Him in their own hearts, their own minds, their own wills. For forty years that battle went on; and it was not until the Jordan made the great divide between that kind of thing and the coming of the Captain of the Lord's host into His place; it was not until then that they moved on into the great fullness which God had intended for them. The inheritance was altogether frustrated while the battle of lordship went on. The inheritance was entered upon as soon as that lordship was established. **Lordship is the key to fullness.**

In the New Testament, it is just the same. Here you have it in the case of the Apostles, the twelve. You can see their defeat and their weakness and their failure and their poverty until Christ becomes Lord, absolute Lord; the Holy Ghost making Him Lord in them as He was Lord in Heaven and then they come into fullness! Pentecost - "Jesus Christ is Lord" - and then fullness!

Take Peter. You remember, Peter had to have a special battle over this. Fullness is a progressive thing. We do not enter upon it all at once, and every fresh measure of that fullness is preceded by some fresh conflict as to the Lordship of Christ, and Peter had several. Peter in Joppa on the housetop had a vision, a sheet let down from Heaven in which were all manner of four-footed creatures, reptiles, unclean beasts, and the voice saying, "*Rise, Peter; kill and eat.*" Peter said, 'Not so, Lord; nothing unclean has ever passed my lips.' And the thing was done thrice, the Lord was insistent; and Peter was wondering what the vision meant, when the messengers of Cornelius arrived from Caesarea. And what was his note there? Well, his note was: "*He is Lord of all*". What happened? Peter entered into something bigger than he had ever had before; that is, he found a bigger Christ than he had known before. In recounting what happened, he says: 'Who was I to withstand God?'

'Who was I? The Lord took this thing in hand and showed Himself far bigger than myself and my tradition - He simply lifted me right out of my old bondages and limitations and landed me out of my depths altogether!' It was all upon that one inward triumph, the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

24 AUG - The Personal Lordship of Christ

... the Saviourhood of Christ is but a recovering thing in relation to His Lordship. The Lordship was the eternal intention of God concerning Him. The Saviourhood is in order to get back to the Lordship, to lead on to the recovery of the Lordship. He can never be actually Lord until He has saved the inheritance of which He is the eternally designated Lord; but when He is Lord, it means that He is Saviour, He HAS redeemed. The Lordship is more than the Saviourhood. And so, when you come on to God's SUPREME ground - *"hath made him a Prince and a Saviour"* - then the way is open for God to take you right on, beyond conversion, beyond the infant stage of just being born again, on to *'growing up into Him in all things'*, on to the fullness of Christ. So they put the full testimony there, where all the rest was included, and thus there was a wide open way for all God's intention.

Wherever you look in the Scriptures, you find that it is Lordship which is the secret of fullness. All the dealings of the Lord with us are not just to get us saved, but to make the Lordship of Christ real in us. Yes, all His dealings with us are to that end, and His dealings with us are personal dealings. Everything is going to be very personal in this matter. You and I, no matter who we may be, if we really come into the Lord's hands, are going to be dealt with in such a way as to bring us to the place where Christ is Lord in our lives. It is going to be personal: for, after all, while the end is corporate and collective, it must of necessity be an individual thing between us and the Lord, so that we know, within our own hearts and experiences that God is working at a very real thing in this matter of making His Son Lord. It is going to be as personal with us as it was with Paul. It may not be in exactly the same way, but it will be just as personal.

"When we were all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking unto me in the Hebrew language..." "I, me, and my own language, and by name, *"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"* (Acts 26:14) It is going to be as personal as that with us; we are not going to pass in the crowd. You say, 'Oh, Paul was an exceptional man, an exceptional case, outstanding; it can never be like that with me!' Well, it is going to be. We may not go on a Damascus road and see a light from Heaven at noontide brighter than the sun. But it is going to be as personal.

25 AUG - The Mark of a Christian Life

The mark of a life governed by the Holy Spirit is that such a life is continually and ever more and more occupied with Christ, that Christ is becoming greater and greater, more wonderful as time goes on. The effect of the Holy Spirit's work in us is to bring us to the shore of a mighty ocean which reaches far, far beyond our range, and concerning which we feel: oh, the depths, the fullnesses, of the riches of Christ! If we live as long as ever man lived, we shall still be only on the fringe of this vast fullness that Christ is. That at once becomes a challenge to us before we go any further. These are not just words. This is not just rhetoric; this is truth. Let us ask our hearts at once: Is this true in our case? Is this the kind of life that we know? Are we coming to despair on this matter? That is to say, that we are glimpsing so much as signified by Christ that we know we are beaten, that we are out of this, and will never range all this. It is beyond us, far beyond us, and yet we are drawn on and ever on. Is that true in your experience? That is the mark of a life governed by the Holy Spirit. Christ becomes greater and greater as we go on. If that is true, well, that is the way of life.

The beginning: *"In Him was life;"* the middle: *"I came that they might have life;"* the end: *"Believing, you may have life."* In that one word *"life"* we have the full answer to our question: "Why did Jesus Christ come into this world?"

Note one or two things: All the teaching and works of the Lord Jesus related to this thing that He called life; all His teaching and all His works were in relation to life.

The second thing to notice is this: Jesus demonstrated that to possess this life is a miracle, and He showed that it is impossible to have it without a miracle. To come to be possessed by this life is something supernatural.

The third thing we have to notice is: It is revealed by the Word of God that the possessing of this life is the basis of all God's works. He can do nothing in us until we have this life. He has to stand back and say: "I can do nothing until I have My life in you." His life in us is the basis of all His work.

26 AUG - The Meaning of the Lord's Dealings

In evangelical Christianity there is a clinging to the idea that we transfer everything to Christ and to Christianity when we are born again. We transfer all our faculties and our powers over to the interests of Christ and then, instead of using them for ourselves and for the world, we use them for Christ. That is the meaning of consecration, of surrender, as the terms are used so largely today in evangelical Christianity, the consecration of ourselves, our gifts, our faculties, our everything, to the Lord and to His service. But that falls short of something. It is not the transference and the consecration of everything that we are to the Lord to be used straightway as it is over on His side for His interests instead of in the world. Christ is other yet, Christ is still different yet from consecrated natural life; *oh, so other!* Something has to happen, our entire mentality has to be changed, transformed. The mind has to be renewed; we have to have an altogether different kind of outlook, even about the things of God. It is a constitutional matter, not merely a directional one.

This is the meaning of the Lord's dealings with us; namely, to get a new mentality, a new conception; another, not our old one transferred, but *another*, and the distance is not the distance of time or geography necessarily, it is the distance of difference; and we make faster or slower progress spiritually according to how we learn this lesson. What is the secret of spiritual progress? It is the letting go of our own will and mind to the fact, to the truth, that after all, though Christians at our best, wanting to be a hundred per cent for the Lord, it is not in us either to be or do. Our will can never do it, our reason can never accomplish it, our impulses and desires can never get us there. We have to come to a brokenness and yieldedness where nature is laid low in the dust and all our treasure is with the stones of the brook and the Almighty becomes our treasure (Job 22:24-25); the Lord alone our wisdom, our strength and vision, our desire. Until you and I have learned the lesson of that utter brokenness and yieldedness and letting go to the Lord, spiritual progress is delayed.

27 AUG - The Altogether Other-ness of Christ

There is an otherness between us and the Lord. Yes, but it is this utterness of the difference between the Lord and ourselves that we have to learn, and that is going to set us over against the colossus of false doctrine, of the iniquitous lie which is being built upon this earth up to heaven, the lie of *humanism*.

That is the greatest lie that has been brought into this universe, that it is in man to be his own savior, that it is in man to rise to perfection, it is in man to be God; it is all in man, the roots are in himself. I say that is Satan's colossus of iniquitous untruth, and God is working out the contradiction of that in a company, in His Church. It is being wrought, worked out, in the unseen; and while it is so difficult to accept it in the day of suffering, weakness, and darkness and inability to understand, if we knew the truth, the probability is that it is just this: God is doing with Satan in and through the Church what He did with Satan in and through Job, answering his challenge and his lie. Here is a broken, shattered, helpless little vessel of saints, bewildered, stripped, thrown back upon their God, unable to do or to understand, clinging to Him and seeking to prove Him, and through that the greatest iniquity in this universe is being assailed by God and answered.

The lie! There never was a time when that lie has reached greater proportion than it has today. But in you and in me, poor broken ones, God has His answer, and it does mean something to the Lord that we have been emptied out to the last drop, thrown back upon Him where He is our wisdom, He is our strength, He is our life, He is our very breath. That means something to Him.

28 AUG - Do You Find You Cannot Pray?

You know, we have our "off" times spiritually - "off" times in the prayer life when it seems impossible to pray; "off" times in many other ways spiritually. No matter how we struggle, we can make nothing of it. What are we going to do? I have come to this position: through the Spirit, Christ is in me, and everything is with *Him*, not with *me*. It is not what I can do, nor what I cannot do, nor how I am today; all is with Him. Today, maybe, I am not conscious of His indwelling, but on the contrary very conscious of other things that are not Christ. Well, that is my state; but He is faithful, He is true. He has given me certain assurances about never leaving nor forsaking me, about abiding through all the days to the end, and about perfecting unto the day of Christ a good work which He hath commenced. My one thing to do is to trust Him - trust Him, and if I cannot break through, to say: "Lord, I cannot pray just at the present; I must trust You to do all the praying."

I find I have these "off" times, but as I definitely trust the Lord, and say: "Lord, this is Your responsibility, and I know this will not last; that prayer life will come back, and I am trusting You in the meanwhile." It does come back, and in greater fullness and greater blessedness.

Beloved I have proved that again and again. It comes back. It is not merely that you get better and start again. You know quite well that you may be perfectly fit and yet be unable to pray. No one can make prayer. It is not a matter of health and strength to be able to pray. You may be a perfectly strong man or woman, but you cannot get through to heaven in prayer because you are that.

Prayer has to do with an opened heaven - prayer is fellowship with the Lord; and that is His doing, not ours. He brings that. Trust Him. *"I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me"*; He has the whole matter in hand. While my attitude is one of faith in Him, He will see that there is a prayer life; He will see that there is a life in the Word. Positive faith in Him is the secret of everything in the will of God.

29 AUG - The Formation of Christ

The thing that matters is the kind of person I am. A kind of person is set before us in Christ. His Person is God's beginning and you can have nothing before a beginning. He is God's end, and you can have nothing after that. So there is nothing outside of Christ. He is God's Man. I emphasize again, we must ever remember that it is the nature, the character, of the manhood according to God that matters, and if that is true, then this means very deep formation. Conformation to Christ takes place in many ways, but two of the most important elements are:

(a) Through Outward Separation

Deep formation firstly through outward separation: that is one thing that is said about the Lord Jesus, that He was separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26), and using that word 'separate', I am only using a more common and ordinary word for the great Bible word 'consecration' or 'sanctification', which are the same word in the original. Consecration or sanctification simply means *set apart unto God*. Outward separation to begin with; separate - not going the way of others; not trying to stand well with them; no policy, no diplomacy, being perfectly willing to let a fundamental difference be recognized, and to take all the consequences of being in this world as something other than that which is here.

(b) By Inward Separation

And then deep formation by inward separation: Israel in the wilderness was outwardly separated, but inwardly not so. That is why, in recounting their history, the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews connects with the wilderness life of Israel those words *"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 joints and marrow"* (Heb. 4:12). You notice the context is Israel in the wilderness, and the meaning therefore is this, that while they were outwardly separated from Egypt and from the nations, they were inwardly not separated; there was something to be done inside to divide asunder between soul and spirit, joints and marrow; a deep inward separation. This cannot be accomplished mechanically. This is some deep inward work of God, getting us circumcised in heart.

30 AUG - Why Are You a Christian?

Jesus was made perfect through sufferings; there is no other way for us. We are not already perfect, but we do stand on the same ground of Divine method. ... *made perfect through suffering*. This manhood, this heavenly manhood, is only going to be produced through suffering. You had better settle it. We do not like it. It does not seem to be the kind of Christianity that we had offered to us in the popular terms. We have been promised so much if we become Christians, it has all been made so rosy. No, He never did that. He said, 'You cannot be My disciple unless you deny yourself, you have to say *No* to yourself, and take up the Cross; you cannot be My disciple unless you hate your own soul and are prepared to lose it' (meaning, to lay it down unto death: Luke 14:26, 27, 33; Matt. 10:38, 39; Matt. 16:24). It is suffering, deep inward formation according to Christ, God's heavenly Man, by outward separation, inward separation and suffering. That is the way that Christ went. He has offered no other way to His disciples and to His servants.

Of course, to leave it there seems rather gloomy, not very attractive; but we have not finished by a very long way. Oh, what this Man in Christ, this corporate Man, this Body of Christ, is destined for! *'What is man, that Thou puttest him in charge of all the inhabited earth to come, whereof we speak?'* (Heb. 2:5, 6) And, more than that, *"know ye not that we shall judge angels?"* (1 Cor. 6:3) I am not going further with that. I simply indicate it, to set that as an offset to what might look like rather a gloomy situation over this suffering business. *"If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him."* (Rom. 8:17) *"If we endure, we shall also reign with Him."* (2 Tim. 2:12) You see, it is not just again putting somebody into an objective position as a reigning monarch. It is spiritual *character*. *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."* (Matt. 5:5)

What the Lord is saying to us at this time is, 'Do you know what you are in this world for? Do you know why I have reached out and laid My hand on you, why you are a Christian, a child of God? Do you know the meaning of it all? It is to make you a man according to My original and abiding thought and intention, to bring you into that Man'. Yes, it applies to all of us. It is a man-hood, a kind of humanity God has ever intended, and if you think this is theory, have you no experience that corroborates what I have said?

31 AUG - What is God After?

What is God after? Why are you set on this scene as you are? Why is it that God does not give us such pleasant situations and circumstances as we crave for, and make it easy for us? Why does it seem rather that He makes it hard, puts us into hard places, and does not deliver us or prevent us from those very trying conditions? Why is the furnace heated seven times for saints, men who are walking with God? Well, what is He doing with us? Is not this the necessary background to formation according to Christ? Where will the characteristics of the heavenly Man have an opportunity, if not in adversity? Love has no meaning unless there is a background of hate. It is supine, it is weak, it is not real. When you read, *"having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end"* (John 13:1), you say, 'that is a miracle'. When you read the prophecies of Hosea, and see God uncovering His heart about Israel, the unfaithful Israel, the unfaithful wife, the harlot wife, and then crying as with a broken heart, *"How shall I give thee up?"* (Hosea 11:8), you have to say, 'that is love'.

You only see it in the light of the background. And this heavenly manhood can only be developed over against a background which is so opposite. That is why He puts you among men who are so earthly, sensual, 'old-Adamic'. That is why He calls upon Christians to live together up against one another's old man. If only we could get with all those nice Christians, it would be easy! But you would not develop any heavenly character if the Lord took that line.

God is practical. We do know that in no other way could God get us changed. He gives us a first-class opportunity just where we are of developing characteristics which are not of the old man at all, they are of the new man; that is the explanation.

SEPTEMBER

1 SEP - Is 'Jehovah Shammah' Written Upon Your Life?

There is a *'judgment beginning at the house of God'* to which the Bible brings us in the first part of its final book. The climax of the sevenfold interrogation, examination and judgment of chapters 1-3 finds Christ outside of the door of a Christian church (3:20). The verdict passed and the admonition given shows that the ultimate criterion is whether God is found within.

To put that in other words: It is not our orthodoxy, 'soundness' of doctrine, correctness of procedure, many 'good works', zeal, 'success', reputation, etc., that is the final criterion and justification (so say all of these messages), but whether the Lord is met with in us and in our midst. The Lord never commits Himself to that which is not according to His mind. If He is truly present and can be sensed by open-hearted and pure-spirited seekers after Him, then that is the argument for things being, at least in measure, not contrary to but according to His heart. The Lord Himself is the *'First and the Last'*, the test of everything. The final question is: 'Do I meet the Lord in that man or woman, in that company and place?'

Many other things are made the basis of judgment by so many, but this is God's test *"Jehovah-Shammah" - "The Lord is there"*. This does not mean that there is never any room for a larger measure of His presence. The measure will always be determined by suitability to that presence. *'To fill all things'* is the determined end made known as God's purpose.

2 SEP - Does Your Life Show that the Lord is Present in You?

It is sometimes a good thing to stand back from all that comes into our lives as believers, both personally and collectively, and ask some fundamental questions. 'Why, really, are we here? Why am I a Christian? What did God mean when He brought Christ into my life? Above and beyond all the details of life and work the trials, sufferings, perplexities; the hopes, blessings, and activities, is there one thing that, in God's thought, governs all?'

Yes, there is! It is that there may be written on the life initially, to become progressively clearer and more luminous: "*Jehovah-Shammah*" "*The Lord is there*". This is a statement of fact supported by the whole Bible. This is a test of everything and the standard of all values and judgment. This is the explanation of all discipline and suffering.

The same is true of the collective aspect. The 'meetings', 'congregations', 'services', 'churches', etc., are to God's pleasure and satisfaction just and only in the measure in which it is positively true that the Lord is there, and is met there. Not artificial and formal ways and means of making an impression of solemnity and reverence; not mysticism and artistry; not soulish emotions, either sober or ecstatic; but the sin-challenging, life and light-giving, heart-satisfying and soul-saving presence of God. The verdict must be not this or that about any feature, but 'We have been in the presence of the Lord: the Lord was there; we have met the Lord!'

May the Lord keep us alive in all things to this ultimate criterion. May we ever be exercised that when people meet us they shall meet the Lord, and that when they gather with us the predominant and abiding impression may be "*THE LORD IS THERE*".

3 SEP - Are You Rightly Related Spiritually?

If we go on with God, the Cross leads us immediately to the House of God. The Cross opens the way to the House of God, and the House of God depends for its full meaning upon whether the Cross has done its work.

A great many people think that the Church, the House of God - or whatever you may term it - is a doctrine, a part of a system of Christian truth. Have you thought that? Well, let me say that you are wrong. What is the House of God? We may first name a number of things which it is not.

The House of God is not a part of a system of Christian truth or teaching. It is not a congregation with religious services. It is not a Christian society with a membership. It is not a religious association for religious purposes. Yet these are the ideas that are in so many minds when we speak of the House of God. People think of it as a place where religious observances are carried out, or as a society set up for religious purposes. The House of God is the spiritual relatedness of believers. *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body ..."* (1 Corinthians 12:13) That is the House of God... a spiritual relatedness.

But it is more. The House of God is the recognized and active relatedness of believers. It is not a nebulous thing. It is not an abstract idea. The spiritual relatedness of believers is very wonderful, but there must be a recognition of it; and that relatedness must be made an active thing. That is the House of God.

Then the House of God represents a greater measure of Christ than is possible to any number of separate individuals. Separate individuals can never come to the Lord's fullness. It will necessitate all the believers for the Lord's fullness to be entered into; but to come to it, believers must needs be in a relatedness... and that, an active relatedness. That is very practical. Any life that is a free-lance - that is independent and detached - will be limited, even though there may be belief in the spiritual relatedness of all believers. This thing has to become practical an actual working thing. Fellowship is essential to fullness.

4 SEP - Are You Holding On To Positive Ground?

"Certain men... taught, saying, 'Except ye... ye cannot...';" "There rose... the sect..., saying, 'It is necessary...'" Acts 15:1, 5

"Except ye" can be a term that governs any aspect or emphasis of either truth or error. It is often used to give undue emphasis upon a particular aspect of truth. It may be an aspect which is essential, but if it is out of relation and proportion to all other essential aspects it will sooner or later 'run to seed' and defeat its own ends. So many *"Excepts"* cut off so much that is truly good and necessary, and close everything into their own complexion. What we have said so far is surely enough to indicate that just one expression *"Except ye... ye cannot"* can be the cause of deformity, limitation, confusion, and suspicion; to say nothing of exclusion and spiritual superiority in the body corporate. It therefore becomes necessary for us to get away from what works out as negative ground and seek to be strong on what is positive. In this matter we can snatch and steal the very term from the wrong usage to the right.

"Except a man be born again he cannot..." (John 3:3, 5) That is a categorical imperative. This imperative was not first said to the poor woman taken in adultery, or to the quisling tax-gatherer, Zaccheus, or to the dying thief, etc; but it was said to the teacher in Israel; a meticulous observer of the law; a Pharisee, the straitest of religious sects; a man who attended all the religious services and joined conscientiously in all the traditional ritual of the most religious of nations! The context of this declared necessity shows that even such a man was incapable of knowing the essential spiritual principles of the Kingdom of Heaven; hence the force of the *"Except"* and the *"Must"*. At the very threshold and door of the Kingdom of God, any and every man must be as though he were not yet born, and to enter he must be as one newly born. This necessity was repeatedly emphasized by Christ to the Jews and their best representatives, and to His own disciples (see Matthew 18:3). This is very sure ground to begin with; but not only for belief; it is a truth to be "made more sure" by experience! Without that we shall never really be sure of anything. Given that, we shall be in a fairly certain position, like that of the healed blind man: *"Whether (this or that) I know not. One thing I (do) know; whereas I was blind, now I see."* "You cannot shake me on that!" 'How?' 'Well, I cannot explain, but the fact, I know.'

5 SEP - Are You Feeding on His Flesh?

"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves."

"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" John 6:53, 52

If it is imperative that a new entity is demanded for entrance into the Kingdom of God *now*, it is equally imperative that such entities shall be sustained and matured. The New Testament is full and emphatic on this matter. In the miracle which led to the statement of the Lord, it is clear that He both recognizes this necessity and acts supernaturally to meet it. If the new birth is supernatural, so is the sustenance of the newborn. If we try to grasp either naturally, as did Nicodemus, we shall, as he, be defeated by the *"How"*. The basic mystery was the plight of the Pharisees in John 6 as it was in the Pharisee of John 3. But it is not the method or process that is of primary concern, but the fact. And yet the *"How"* is answered in the New Testament. Let us first, however, get quite clear on this that we have got to be fed in our new spiritual life for its maintenance as truly as the natural body has to have food. Then, it is as true in the spiritual as in the natural that normality is marked by growth unto maturity. And, finally, that full, abundant, provision is made for this by the Lord, even to twelve baskets 'full over'. Is it necessary at this point to take time to show that it is not normal to be born again and finish there? The whole New Testament is against such an idea or state!

But when we have said that, what of this *"How"* by which the imperative is answered, and the *"Except ye"* satisfied?

The superficial answer is - of course - feeding, and feeding on Christ. If many Christians were asked what that means, they would probably answer that it is feeding on His Word. Thus it might resolve itself into reading a 'portion' of the Bible every day. That is very good, and important; but is that what 'feeding' really is? Is it not what Christ becomes to us through the Word?

Now this is an immense matter, because Christ is so immense, and by this 'feeding' an immense Body has to be brought to full-growth and stand complete in eternity. It is what Paul calls *"the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"*. Here, we can only give an indication of what this feeding is, and it will point to much more.

6 SEP - Is Your Life a Dwelling Place for God?

If we are really to be the dwelling place of God, then we are to be nothing in ourselves. Do not look for reputation, do not try to make an impression, do not stand on your own dignity, do not do any of those things in any way whatever which will give you prominence with people and make them think something of you. It will not pass with the Lord.

So let us get rid of it, every bit of it, and recognize what we are in God's sight. He is going to bring that about; so if we try to make people think we are other than we are in order to get an advantage, we are contradicting the principle of the house of God. All self-importance must go, and all desire for recognition. All that sort of thing has to be wiped out. The house of God is not founded on that. God will not have it. Man is abased, and all the other is the devil's work. It comes from him in whose heart pride was found.

When young men and women have given up all the prospects of this world and laid their treasures in the dust and gone forth at the command of the Lord, they have laid everything in ashes so far as this world's hopes and prospects are concerned. The Church has been built in that way. Even when it is not like that in great acts of life's vocation, it is a daily thing, a letting go of our own interests in obedience to the Lord, in faith in the Lord. It is thus the building goes on. I could work that down to very fine points and show how often the house of God is delayed and arrested in its progress by the withholding of something on which the Lord has laid his finger and said 'I want that'.

However there is the general principle, the triumph of faith through obedience when all is in the dust. Abraham believed God, and that great triumph provided God with the site for His temple, the great example and type of that spiritual house which is central to the fulfillment of all His purposes. God dwells in that sort of thing. But that central thing has to go through the depths. That which is the very heart of God's presence to which He commits Himself, has to know stripping more than others. This involves a deep work where faith is brought to perfection through very deep testing.

7 SEP - The Measure of the Life of Christ in You (1 of 4)

An organism is never an end in itself... and is never something for itself. It is a means to a larger end, a channel for larger purposes; and the object of an organism is to reproduce itself by life. That reproduction is always sacrificial. It always costs. It is always by the vessel's yielding up of itself in some way. That is to say, death is the way to increase. Reproduction is sacrificial. That brings us to the passage of Scripture in which the Lord summed up everything with regard to His future relationship with His own... and the result of His having come into this world: *"Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."* John 12:24

Unless a life propagates, it remains without being marked by any purpose. It is an end in itself, and God never meant any organism to be that. It saves its own life by letting it go so that increase may be the result. The law of increase is sacrifice *"Except a corn of wheat fall into the earth and die..."* There is no propagation, there is no increase, there is no reproduction except by letting all that is merely personal go... in the interest of what is other and more.

Christ risen is shown to be a reality for inward expression, inward experience. The risen Life of the Lord is to be in us. Christ is to be in us by His Life... and by His Spirit of Life. The inward meaning and value of Christ risen is the reproduction of His Life in all those in whom He is, that all such as have Him dwelling in them in the power of His risen Life should be an expression of Christ in Life and should manifest Him in the power of the Life. It is reproduction of the Christ-Life in us.

The law of that reproduction in us is that we ourselves should die and should accept the place of death so that all personal life, personal interest, is entirely put away, is shed, is parted with... and Christ becomes all. That is what Paul meant when he said, *"I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live; yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me."* Here is the expression of Christ produced because all life that is not of Christ has been yielded to the Cross and has died. It has fallen into the grave of the Lord Jesus, and out of the grave of the Lord Jesus there has come an expression of Him.

8 SEP - The Measure of the Life of Christ in You (2 of 4)

In our union with Christ in His death, we cease and He begins; and from the beginning He becomes the all. That is a progressive thing, as well as a basic thing. It is a thing all-inclusive in its meaning - in its intent - but it is also progressive. We have to accept the fullness of that thing in an act. We have to take the position quite definitely and consciously that now, in accepting our union with Christ in His death, this is to work out in our having no more place at all... that whenever we come into evidence we shall be smitten - we shall be put aside, we shall not be allowed to go on.

We have to accept once for all in a definite act of commitment that from henceforth everything that is of self is going to be smitten unsparingly with that Cross... and that whenever self comes in, it will not be allowed to have a standing. We had better settle it once for all... and have a dealing with the Lord on that inclusive, comprehensive, and utter ground... that He will make real His own meaning in that; not our understanding of it, not our grasp or apprehension of it, not what we think to be the "I" which is to be forbidden, but what He knows to be the "I"; not the measure of our knowledge of ourselves, but His knowledge of us. There will be revealed a very great deal more that is "I" than has ever entered our thought or imagination. Self, then, not as we know it, but as He knows it through and through, is to be brought under the power of that Cross: and this we accept in an act.

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

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

9 SEP - The Measure of the Life of Christ in You (3 of 4)

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

Increase may be brought about in two ways. One is the way of imitation. You can turn out so many things as by a mold; that is, by making so many things on the same pattern and thus increasing, multiplying, by imitation. It hardly needs saying that such is not the New Testament way with regard to the growth of the Church. That is not the New Testament way of reproduction.

The other way is by conception; that is, the outgrowth of life from within, the form which life takes when it expresses itself when it has its way. It is inward rather than outward. The difference between imitation and what is conceived is the difference between what is dead and what is alive. One is made, the other is born; and the constitution of the Church is the result of the activity and energy of a Life, the Lord's own risen Life ... being transmitted, passed on. Whatever you may develop, you will never get a development of the true Church unless the risen Life of Christ is operative and is there in sufficient measure to be transmitted by the Spirit.

The same law holds good as to the order of the Church. It is the result of His Life. Again, two kinds of things are possible. You can appoint to office and set apart with certain titles and names which represent certain spheres of activity or kinds of work and responsibility. You can elect or vote into such office or position and proceed along that line, setting up the Church order. Or you can follow another line, and *be ruled by the law of life*, whereby account is taken of the working and expression of the Lord's life in the members of the Church, of the way in which the members, by that life, begin to show marks of certain spiritual ability.

10 SEP - The Measure of the Life of Christ in You (4 of 4)

It is the Lord who expands His Church, who governs its growth. What we have to do is to live in the place of His appointment in the power of His resurrection. If, in the midst of others, the Lord can get but two of His children, in whom His Life is full and free, to live on the basis of that Life and not to seek to gather others to themselves or to get them to congregate together on the basis of their acceptance of certain truths or teaching, but simply to witness to what Christ means and is to them, then He has an open way. As witness is simply and livingly borne in this way, one and another will be provoked at length to say: I do wish I had what they have! And another will say: I covet that one's experience. It is just what I have been seeking for! Such as these will either come to inquire the way of salvation, or opportunity will be found to lead them to the Lord. It is in this way that the Church grows.

Its growth may be furthered at a street corner as you preach Christ and someone responds; and believing on Christ with the heart and confessing Him as Lord with the mouth, Life is given by the Spirit and that one becomes the Lord's. The Church is not increased by your going and taking a building and trying to get people to come to it... and to your meetings... and then forming them, by a church roll, into a local church. That is not the way. Growth is by Life; and this, to begin with, may be by the entering into Life of but one soul... and then, after a long waiting time, of another; or it may be more rapid. But the point is that it is increase because of Life. That is the growth of the Church.

For the growth of His Church, the Lord must have life channels, life centers. I believe that, given a life center, sooner or later one of two things will happen, that it will be abundantly manifest that Christ is fully and finally rejected there, or else there will be an adding, a growth. There is tremendous power in life, and the life of the Lord either kills or quickens. It depends on the attitude taken toward it. He is a saviour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Things can never remain neutral. What the Lord needs is life centers.

11 SEP - Have You Been Judged By the Cross?

In the altar of whole burnt offering, the one unrighteous man is completely removed. That altar of brass sees one man brought to ashes. The ashes were taken from this altar and emptied onto the ground at the side of the altar. That is a picture of God's Mind about the unrighteous man, or the natural man. He is consumed in the fire of God's judgment, he is reduced to ashes, and he is poured out on the ground. THAT IS GOD'S MIND ABOUT THE NATURAL MAN. On the other side, it is only THE RIGHTEOUS MAN that can stand here in the presence of this altar. Of course, those are the two sides of THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE LORD JESUS. On the one side HE was made sin for us, and in that capacity He was wholly consumed and brought to ashes. When He cried, *"My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me?"* - it was the cry of the ashes! He had been brought to ashes, and poured out on the ground.

But then there was the other side of the Cross *"He knew no sin."* In Himself, there was no unrighteousness, and, therefore, He can go through the altar, He can live after the fire! *"Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption."* Because in Himself there was no sin, He could not be holden of death. His Holy Nature could overcome all the righteous judgments of God! This is the meaning of the great altar: one man is brought to an end, and Another Man stands in his place. Everything had been judged at the altar. Everything IS judged in the Cross.

We have been judged in the Cross of the Lord Jesus, and in our own selves we have been brought to an end. Everything of the natural has been judged and brought to an end in the Cross of the Lord Jesus. It is a very important thing to recognize that. You see, that makes anything possible. That is why if the Cross is in its place, everything else would be right. The House will be right; that is, the Church will be right. The ministry will be right. The order will be right. You will not have to go to work to try and bring about a right order. It spontaneously comes out of the work of the Cross.

You may meet disorders in the House of God. You may meet the natural man in the House of God. You may meet conditions which are all wrong in the House of God. How are you going to deal with them? You can only deal with them by the principle of the Cross. You cannot deal with the people themselves, you cannot deal with the things themselves; but if only you can bring the Cross into that situation, you have solved the whole problem. Everything is judged by the Cross.

12 SEP - Let the Cross be Your Defense Against the Enemy

The altar was the great defensive against the enemy. If you look in the Book of Ezra in chapter three, at verse three, you have this: *"so they set up the altar on its foundation, for they were terrified because of the peoples of the lands..."* Because fear of the peoples of the lands was upon them, they put the altar in its place. The Cross is a great defensive - the Cross defends us from the world. The world is the great enemy of the Church. The spirit of the world has always been the Church's great enemy. Satan has always tried to get the world into the Church and so wreck the Church and its ministry, to destroy the influence of the Church in the world. It is a very clever and subtle move of the enemy to destroy the influence of the Church in the world by bringing the world into the Church. For Paul said, *"God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"* (Gal 6:14).

A truly crucified people are never in danger of the world. It is only when the Cross has not done its work that the world has a place. The world has no place with a crucified man or woman, or a crucified company of believers. The Cross is a great defensive against the world. *If you want to keep the world out, put the cross in its place.* If the Cross is truly in its place in fullness, then everything else will come into order. THE CROSS is the great defensive against the world. THE CROSS is the great defensive against evil powers. THE CROSS makes everything safe; it makes everything safe for the Lord.

You see, the Lord wants to commit Himself. He wants to trust Himself to His people, but if the Cross is not there at work, the Lord cannot trust Himself to them. The Lord says, "It is not safe for Me to give Myself there, or I should be involved in their un-crucified condition." The Cross makes everything safe for the Lord, and the Cross makes everything safe for the Church. If the Cross is really at work in all of us, we can trust one another. It is quite safe to trust yourself to a crucified man or woman.

13 SEP - The Snare of Worldliness

It is interesting to notice the particular way in which the Apostle speaks of the world in Gal 6:14. The world is crucified to him. That term is a very comprehensive term and includes a very great deal.

What does the Apostle mean? He sets over against this his own clear spiritual position. Do I seek glory of men? Do I seek to be well pleasing to men? No! The world is crucified to me, and I to the world. All that sort of thing does not weigh with me. What weighs with me is not whether my movement is successful, whether I am getting a lot of followers, whether there are all the manifestations outwardly of success; what weighs with me is the measure of Christ in those with whom I have to do.

You see how the world can creep in ... and how worldly we can become almost imperceptibly by taking account of things outwardly — of how men will think and talk, what they will say, the attitude they will take; of the measure of our popularity, the talk of our success. That is all the world, says the Apostle, the spirit of the world; that is how the world talks. Those are the values in the eyes of the world, but not in the eyes of the risen Christ. In the new creation, on the resurrection side of the Cross, one thing alone determines value ... and that is the measure of Christ in everything. Nothing else is of value at all, however big the thing may be, however popular it may be, however men talk favorably of it; on the resurrection side that does not count a little bit. What counts is how much of Christ there is.

You and I in the Cross of the Lord Jesus must come to the place where we are crucified to all those other elements. Ah, you may be unpopular, and the work be very small; there may be no applause, and the world may despise; but in it all there may be something which is of Christ, and that is the thing upon which our hearts must be set. The Lord gives us grace for that crucifixion. There are few things more difficult to bear than being despised; but He was despised and rejected of men. What a thing is in God's sight must be our standard. That is a resurrection standard. Now that is the victory of the Cross: *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"*.

14 SEP - Do You Recognize God's Right upon Your Life in Reality?

All that which is redeemed by His Precious Blood is redeemed unto God. It is for the Lord. Do we hold everything unto the Lord? Hold our business unto the Lord? - hold our home unto the Lord? - hold all our money unto the Lord? - hold our children unto the Lord? - hold our friendships unto the Lord? - hold our bodies unto the Lord? - hold all our opportunities unto the Lord? Everything unto the Lord, and everything that we cannot hold unto the Lord let go! No longer a question, "is there any harm in it?" - that is negative. There is nothing negative in this life, the question is, is it unto the Lord positively. That is the meaning of Calvary - *"unto the Lord,"* the whole burnt-offering unto the Lord. That is what it means to be in Christ. He is the whole burnt-offering. To be in Him is to be offered wholly unto God.

"Henceforth," says the Word of the Spirit, *"henceforth not unto ourselves but unto Him."* He secured it all. He secured the earth in His Own Person for the Lord. He settled the dispute as to who should be the prince of this world, who should be the God of this world, who should hold sway of this world, who should sit upon the throne of this world? That is the dispute of the ages. He secured the world unto God in His Own Person.

Beloved, this world by right of Christ's Victory belongs to God. Therein is our vocation found, to take it for God, to stand on it, put our feet down and say "we stand here for God." He secured the world, *"all authority has been given unto Me in heaven and in earth."* He secured man. Man, that disputed thing, made for the glory of God, but meddled with by Satan, so that even man gave his consent to Satan's will and authority and right. But in His Own Divine Person as Man (oh the wonder of the incarnation), as Man, God and man joined in one Person. As Man, He secured man representatively for God, for *"as by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead"* - the God-Man. He secured man in that Cross as free, utterly free from the power of Satan. It is in that sense that God has secured man in Christ. He has secured the world, He has secured man, He has dealt with Satan and He has dealt with death, all in this Cross of Christ.

The issue now for the world is to recognize the rights of God, to recognize the rights of God as secured in Christ, to take sides, to acknowledge that. Now that sets up a testimony; that is the testimony of God in Christ, which becomes the testimony of Jesus.

15 SEP - Have You a Place in the Heavenly Life of the Church?

The Spirit constitutes the Church, which is the true Church according to the mind of God. Not what we call the Church, but what God calls the Church. He constitutes that and He constitutes it as we have seen a thing in which that testimony is placed in trust. The Church is here left on the earth but having a heavenly Life, in order that that Testimony may be here borne and upheld on the earth; that God has universal rights, these rights are secured in the Person of Jesus Christ, and that the Cross of Calvary was the scene and is the power of the establishment of that Testimony; the message of the Cross, Christ crucified, the power of God, the wisdom of God.

The Church is here in trust for that purpose. The Testimony of all that Calvary secures in Christ is deposited in the Church, and in as much as God has not wiped the adversary out of the universe yet, but let him remain and given him so much liberty, is explained along this line that God is going to work out all the content of that Testimony in and through the Church.

That explains why immediately there is an entering into the Testimony of Jesus in the power of the Holy Ghost, not in mind, thought, doctrine, teaching, human association, but *in the power of the Holy Ghost*, the enemy at once begins his terrific onslaughts and goes over the ground again to, by any means, device or scheme, wipe that Testimony out of the earth by wiping the Church out - if he can ... The dark things are brought to light, the enemy is brought to light, the devices of the enemy are brought to light, and it is in the face of that the Church stands.

Oh, beloved, we are here, if we are really members of His Body, not merely to present to men the gospel, that is a part, a great vital part of this whole, but we are here that *"Now unto the principalities and powers in the Heavenlies might be made manifest the manifold wisdom of God by the Church," "NOW!"* We have heard that many times that the vocation of the Church is not limited to flesh and blood; it reaches far beyond to other spheres. The testimony is universal, not local, even as to the earth, but beyond the earth.

16 SEP - The Way for Things to Be As They Should Be

Christians believe in the Holy Spirit. Very many desire to know the Holy Spirit as a reality and power in their lives. But it should really be understood and recognized that the Holy Spirit is committed and wedded to the Cross. His coming awaited the work of the Cross. Only after the symbolic representation of the Cross in death, burial and resurrection with Christ by baptism did the Holy Spirit take His place in power in the lives of the first believers. Because the taproot of everything that the Cross was meant to deal with is the self-life, the self-principle, the New Testament word for which is "the Flesh"; the Holy Spirit leads those under His government into the experiences which are calculated to expose and bring to the Cross the self-life of the child of God. It is a primary and inseparable part of the Holy Spirit's business to make good and real the meaning of the Cross.

This is not popular truth, but the Cross is the gateway to fullness, and the deeper the Cross the greater the measure of Divine life, power and light. This is the only way for things to be as they should be, and as God wishes them to be. Life, food, light, fellowship, and much more depend upon the degree in which the Cross is a reality in the individual and in the company. This touches the whole realm and range of Satan's power and work. Power, authority over him is inseparable from the Cross. Therefore he will do everything to undercut, to set aside, to belittle, and discredit the Cross. The Person of Christ and the Cross of Christ have been the two grounds of the most bitter controversy in the history of Christianity. Of course, they are really one thing. It is the Person Who gives the Cross its real meaning, and it is the Cross that vindicates the Person, provided that by the Cross is meant the death, burial, and resurrection.

The Cross and fullness of life in its several aspects - that is, abundance of life, food, light, fellowship, finance and victory over Satan - is not just theory or idealism. We have written history and experience in our own time. We have seen this in reality, and have also closely studied the course of things in many Christian communities.

The Scriptures make it quite clear that the Cross of Christ is something that has to become very real in the experience, and not only in the doctrine, of the Christian.

17 SEP - A Call for Spiritual Stamina

This working of His death in the history of a believer, and in a local church (if it is on a right foundation) will be progressive and periodic. The law of nature is more life, more fruit, more growth, by recurrent winter, alternating experiences of death and life, and every cycle unto increase. This is the law of the Cross. God is not a God who believes in theories; He is immensely practical. The theory of the Cross is universally held. The meaning of the Cross is to displace one entire kind, in order to make room for Another, *capital A*.

One of the greatest enemies to things being as they should and could be is our superficiality. This is an age of 'quick returns', easy gains, least trouble, everything with as little effort and cost as possible. Depth is a lost dimension. Stamina is a minus quality. Who today would take the pains to read such classics on the cross as Dr. Mabie's [*The Divine Reason of the Cross*](#) and [*The Meaning and Message of the Cross?*](#) This superficiality is costing the Church and Christians very dearly, and so there is artificial life, artificial food, artificial fellowship which will not go through in the time of testing.

There is such a depth, power, fullness, in the Cross of Christ as to spread over all time and all eternity. So saw the Apostle when, at the end of the fullest life, he still cried: *"That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings; being made conformable unto his death"* (Philippians 3:10).

18 SEP - The Call to a Life of Resurrection

It is important to remember that death is not only a law or a principle. It is that; but the Scriptures constantly make clear that behind the thing there is *a person*. Back of death is he *"that had the power of death, that is, the devil"*. Conybeare translates that: *"the lord of death"*. The great battle which took place at the exodus of Israel from Egypt was really a battle between Jehovah and *"all the gods of Egypt"* (Exodus 12:12), which gods were but the spiritual hierarchy of him who had ever made it his aim to be *"like the Most High"*, and had assumed the role of *"the god of this world"*. A right understanding of that story would make very clear that it was a conflict between the Lord of life and the lord of death, and that the Hebrews were only translated out of the kingdom of darkness and the authority of death because a lamb had shed its blood, and through death had figuratively destroyed him that had the power of death.

This was fulfilled at Calvary, for on the Cross Christ drew on Himself the whole hierarchy of evil, and went down under it to the bottommost reach of its domain, and then, by reason of the life which could not be holden of death, He stripped off principalities and powers, broke through, and rose their Conqueror. It was in resurrection far above all rule and authority that He became the Firstborn from the dead, the first and inclusive One of all who should be identified with Him.

Let us point out that after His resurrection our Lord was, because of the peculiar nature of His resurrection state, no longer subject to natural limitations. Time and space now had no control of Him. This principle abides, and it applies now. When there is a living in the values and energy of resurrection life we are children of eternity and of the universe. Prayer touches the ends of the earth, and the significance of our being and doing is of universal and eternal dimensions: there are no limitations.

So then, beloved of God, the natural life is no longer a criterion; whether it be strong or weak matters not. Its weakness does not carry a handicap. We are called to live and serve only in His life, which is the only efficient and sure one. What is true of the Head must be true of the members. What is true of the Vine must be true of the branches. What is true of the last Adam must be true of every member of His race. *"Planted together in the likeness of his resurrection"*, said the apostle (Romans 6:5), and he prayed that it might be more and more experimental: *"that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection"* (Philippians 3:10). That should be the prayer of every true Spirit-led servant of Christ.

19 SEP - The Cross That Condemns the World

Much of the preaching and teaching in the Christian Church is either confined to the "Historic Jesus", which presents a Cross-less Christ, or gives a very modified meaning to His death. And yet it is surely necessary to declare that the Cross is God's Way of salvation, God's sufficient and God's *only* way.

It is, further, surely very clear that the Cross was dominant in New Testament days, but now we ask why has the Cross always been such a maker of trouble and such a cause of offence? And why is it that it is today behind much of the upheaval even in many of our professedly evangelical institutions and denominations, Christian homes, local churches and individual Christian lives?

In His Cross Christ created a great divide between the old world and the new, a divide which cannot be bridged. Two distinctly different systems, scales of value, standards of judgment, sets of laws, prevail on the two sides of the Cross; the system of each is not only entirely different, but irreconcilable and forever antagonistic to the other.

The Cross demands an absolute distinctiveness of interests and objectives, relationships and resources. It draws the final distinction between the saved and the unsaved, between the living and the dead. The apostle Paul said that by the Cross he had *"been crucified to the world"* and the world crucified to him. The Word of God emphatically declares that the age is evil and that *"the whole world lieth in the wicked one"* and that its ways, motives, purposes, ideas and imaginations are all the opposite of God's and that it is utterly incapacitated from either receiving the revelation of the divine mind, growing of itself into the divine image, enjoying and appreciating real fellowship with God, or being entrusted with the privilege of co-operation with God.

It is this verdict, condemnation, and demand of the Cross which is unacceptable and irritating to a very great number of professing Christians. Further, it is the presence of much that is called "worldliness" both in the individual Christian life and in the Church which absolutely neutralizes their effectiveness in the realization of the essential purposes of the Cross.

20 SEP - The Cross Crucifies the Flesh

The Word of God declares that *"our old man has been crucified with Christ"* (Romans 6:6). *"One died for all, therefore all died in Him, that they which live should henceforth live no longer unto themselves, but unto him"* (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). We have tried to bring some of the old creation life into the new creation and God won't have it. The history of the fallen race was concluded so far as God was concerned at Calvary. From that time onward, God's entire concern was the new creation, but alike our human capabilities as well as our infirmities; what we call our better side as our worse; our goodness and our badness have been included in that death. Henceforth we are called to live not on a human level but on a divine. Humanly we possess nothing which is acceptable to God.

It is always the assertion of some human element, some like or dislike, some fad or fancy, some ambition or some personal interest, which paralyses the real spiritual work of God. To regard not only our sins but ourselves as having been taken to the Cross by Christ is the only way by which those purposes of God can be wrought out through our lives. It is strange that while we ourselves are the bane of our own existence, the trouble of our own lives, we are so slow to accept our crucifixion with Christ, to have the Cross wrought out to our death in order that the life of Christ might be made manifest in us. Herein lies the offence of the Cross, not only for the worldling but also for the Christian.

Let us not forget that the enjoyment of the full life of God, the experience of victory, and executive co-operation with Him that sitteth upon the throne in the sure realization that His eternal purposes are ours just in so far as we are one with the full and essential meaning of the Cross as set forth in the Word of God.

"I have been crucified with Christ, henceforth... no longer I but Christ."

"They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and they counted not their lives dear unto the death" (Revelation 12:11).

21 SEP - Are You Taking the Heavenly Ground?

The best illustration of what this means is presented to us in considerable fullness in the New Testament, and particularly in Paul's letters. We can narrow these down to two: 'Corinthians' and 'Ephesians'. One is the *earthly*; the other is the *heavenly*. What is meant by the earthly is clear in 1 Corinthians, especially for our present point in the early part. Implying that it is wrong for supposedly spiritual people to be or to act so, the Apostle uses the words: "*Are ye not men?*" (3:4) This clearly means, as the context shows, that spiritual and heavenly people are not allowed to proceed as the rest of men do. The immediate connection (although it applies to all the other things) is that of divisions and circles bearing particular names and taking the character of natural preferences. This might be temperamental, doctrinal, emotional, intellectual, or 'spiritual'(?). Whatever the causes or occasions, Paul says this behaviour is "*natural*" and "*carnal*" - it is acting as "*men*". In a word, it is earthly. At best, he says, it is childish, or 'babyish'; it does not signify any spiritual stature. Looking at Christianity today by this standard, we cannot fail to be painfully impressed with how little the Church has grown up.

But that is the negative side. When we turn to 'Ephesians', we find ourselves in the presence not only of the oft-repeated words "*the heavenlies*", but of the realities and characteristics of that realm. Here is the "*one body*". Here is the "*unity of the Spirit*". Here is heavenly wealth, walk, warfare. Here is relatedness and inter-relatedness. The Apostle, nay, the Holy Spirit has no restraint in giving out of the fullness, that it may lead again to the fullness of Christ. Here are the measureless dimensions of eternal thoughts, counsels, purpose, and love. Here is ascendancy over disappointment, frustration, discouragement, and earthly limitations. Here is grace transcendent and triumphant. Yes, truly we are on heavenly ground here while all those things are bitterly true down below. To be "*seated together with him (Christ) in the heavenlies*" is no mere ideal, fantasy, illusion, beautiful concept, or sublime teaching; it is real because of the literal counter-realities to which it is set in contrast.

22 SEP - An Appeal to Take the Ground of the Cross

The Corinthians knew about the Cross. They were *"in Christ"*, and there is no way into Christ but that of the Cross. Yes, but even so, the Apostle said that in visiting them it was his considered, resolute, and premeditated determination that he would *'know nothing among them, save Christ, and him crucified'* (2:2). There was a knowledge of the Cross which either they did not possess, or else they were violating. In 'Ephesians', the death and resurrection 'togetherness' with Christ is foundational to all that fullness of heavenly position. In Corinth, the value of the Cross was in what it meant *for* them, rather than what it meant *in* them. There is undoubtedly a difference in these aspects, both as to position and as to results. The fuller aspect may have a deeper application to the natural life but, again, both in one are presented to us for our apprehending by faith.

The Cross not only deals with our sins and our condemnation: it deals with all our earthliness, our natural ground, which is so fruitful in those works which bring dishonour to our Lord. We are especially thinking of this spirit which produces or ferments jealousies, rivalries, contentions, criticisms, and all that is not love.

If we would take heavenly ground and the ground of the Cross, the Holy Spirit would be able to cause the things which really do not matter to fade from their importance, and to give the Lord's people a loving concern for all who are His, just because they are His, and not 'ours' in any earthly way.

23 SEP - "The Sentence of Death in Ourselves"

"Yea, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves but in God, which raiseth the dead.... Always bearing about in the body the deadness of Jesus that the Life also of Jesus may be manifest in our mortal body..." 2 Corinthians 1:9, 4:10

"The sentence of death in ourselves" - that is the very basis of everything in real spiritual fruitfulness and effectiveness.

If you take up the Holy Spirit's teaching in the New Testament, you will find that this has become the foundational principle of all Divine activities and operations: the sentence of death passed upon us and registered in us and working out in us, and all the time another thing doing the work of God, triumphing over this sentence of death in us, this other thing which is in us, working through us, giving us ascendancy over death in Christ, so that the wonderful things of God are manifest by us when there is no accountableness for them in us. The Lord has swept away with one stroke the whole basis of our trust in ourselves - has wiped out forever any hope in ourselves - not to destroy us, not to make everything impossible, but THAT He who raiseth the dead might show the mighty works by this Resurrection Life which is fruitful in us.

This is the principle all the way through the Word, that on the ground of a Life wrought in us through the cross by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God is able to achieve and accomplish His supreme purpose. But in order to do it, the sentence of death must be planted right at the center of our old life to rule it out, so that where we despair of life in ourselves and have no trust in ourselves, we know we cannot of ourselves accomplish anything, *there* is the mighty Life of God for everything - that is, *"Christ in you,"* the Life of God, the hope of glory.

24 SEP - Is God In What You Are Doing?

Beloved, the principle of Life in your spirit is to be the guiding principle of all your service in the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not mean Life in your surroundings. The Lord may take you to a place where death reigns, but if death reigns in you, you may as well give up the whole thing at once. You may be there, and the Life of God may be in you to meet that situation to triumph over it; but mark you, if you begin to touch what you call pieces of work for God and there is no Life in your spirit, the thing is dead in your spirit; you have no right there until you get in your spirit the Life of God relative to that thing. Don't touch it, or you will be found in dead works, trying to do something where there is no vital principle at all.

A lot of people hold on and continue in certain realms, certain spheres, certain companies, certain connections; and they are there merely from the standpoint of natural reasoning and argument, sentimentality, tradition, or somehow thinking that by staying in, something is going to be done; while in their spirit they know the thing is dead, and they have no Life there.

Oh, that God's people had discernment, spiritual discernment! The one cry in our spirit is that His people might be more discerning – to be able to discern in their spirit where Life is and where death is. We have got to get on to the thing that God is doing, for only in this can we have the witness of Life that it is the thing of God, and that we shall get through. In order that He might be able to consummate His purpose, gather up His plan and bring it to a mighty, victorious issue in the coming of the Lord, our need is to have Life more abundant... and the spiritual discernment by Life, to know where Life is and where death is. You may be doing what you call the work of God and have death in your Spirit; and that very doing of what you call the work of God because there is death in your spirit is antagonistic to the purpose of God. You may have Life in your Spirit and death all around, but the fact that you have the witness of Life is both the key and the assurance that something is to be accomplished.

I believe, beloved, that we dare not do a thing unless we have definite witness in our spirit that it is the thing of God to be done through us.... Is God in this? Is God in that? Has God undertaken it? The answer to that question in your spirit will not be an audible voice; it must ever be the liberty and the freedom and the uprising of His Life in you that gives you a clear way through in your spirit.

25 SEP - The Hallmark of Sonship is Resurrection

The first Adam was called God's son (Luke 3:38) and in a sense this was true, but that sonship was never fully realized; all its meaning, all its potential, all the divine intention, was never known. It was sonship on probation which never attained to determination. In the case of the Lord Jesus, however, we are told that He was *"determined the Son of God..."* (Romans 1:4 m.). The first Adam failed, and in him the whole race lost its sonship. That was why the Lord Jesus went to the Cross as representative of the whole race, to meet the final consequences of that lost sonship. Those consequences were known in that eternal period of unspeakable agony, when there was the awful consciousness of what it means to be abandoned by God. By nature we are out of Christ, without God and without hope in this world, but we are not fully aware of it nor of what it involves. In that phase of the Cross, the Lord Jesus was, so to speak, projected into the full realization of that complete consciousness of what God-forsakenness really means, that which is the very terrible destiny of all deliberate rejectors to find themselves rejected.

But while our sonship through the Cross and the risen Christ is to be appropriated and entered into by faith as an act, yet for the purpose of our testimony here, it is something which has to be continuous as a spiritual experience. It is accepted in an act, but it has to be borne out in a continuous process. The New Testament shows that sonship is something which relates to the whole life of the believer in a practical way of expression, so that inasmuch as it is inseparably bound up with resurrection in the case of the Lord Jesus, for us it demands a constant experience of His resurrection power.

How do we know sonship? Well, there was a time when we believed, and in believing were made children or sons of God. *"Ye are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:26). Because we believe, we have the sonship. That is very good, and of course we have always to cling tenaciously by faith to the fact that it is so. But that may have been years ago. Did the Lord just mean it to be something in our past history, something which took place years ago? We have always to hold on to that transaction with the Lord and believe, but does it not call for a reinforcement as we go along? Is there no opportunity for it to be more and more confirmed? Surely the Word teaches that there is; and so not only the origin but the experience of the believer should be that of sonship being freshly demonstrated and manifested on the same ground as its origin - that is, *resurrection*.

26 SEP - The Reality of Sonship

What is God's confirmation of our sonship? It is that He gives us continual experiences of being raised from the dead. He has left us here in a setting and a background of death: we are called upon to live and to walk amidst death. This world is a tomb, which sooner or later will engulf all those outside of Christ; but here we are in this very tomb, this scene and realm of death, *living*. We are not a part of it, we are living, and this is the testimony, this is sonship. Sonship is meant to be manifested. The end of this process is the full manifestation of the sons of God according to Romans 8:19. Here, in a spiritual way, the manifold wisdom of God is shown in the Church, to the glory of His name and to the confounding of principalities and powers.

Our new birth is our first taste of resurrection life. We notice that, after quoting the passage concerning Christ: *"Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee"*, the Scriptures present a further quotation: *"I and the children whom God hath given me"* (Hebrews 2:13). The completion of the original statement is: *"Behold I and the children whom God hath given me are for signs and wonders..."* (Isaiah 8:18). It is clear that Isaiah's words are put into the mouth of the Lord Jesus who links the announcement of His own Sonship by resurrection to the fact that by that same resurrection He has begotten us again unto a living hope. We are the children given to Him by virtue of His resurrection. And we are for signs and wonders.

What does this mean? Well when the evil generation of Jews demanded a sign from the Lord Jesus, He replied: *"... there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet"* (Matthew 12:39). He went on to point out that this sign of Jonah was connected with death and resurrection. So the signs and wonders associated with Christ and the children whom the Father has given Him are the miracles of resurrection life. This is the experience of the spiritual Christian; he repeatedly knows the impact of death and the glory of Christ's resurrection. So it is that the Church has survived. There is no other way of accounting for the continuance of the Church through the ages than the wonder-working power of Christ's resurrection. The powers of hell and death have come like a deluge upon the Church through the centuries and have sometimes almost seemed to quench it, but it has sprung up again in greater fullness than ever before after every such time.

27 SEP - The Lord's Dealings are Based on Our Pride

On the one side, it is terribly true: *"Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord"* (Prov. 16:5). *"The haughty he knoweth from afar"* (Ps. 138:6). It all sprang out of that proud heart that lifted itself up and said, *"I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; ...I will be like the Most High"* (Isa. 14:13, 14). With that *I*, all the trouble began, and that one bit his poison into the race. The poison of the human race is *pride*, and it has come all the way down. It is sometimes almost untraceable: we are not able always to trace it out in all its forms, because pride has what we might call negative aspects as well as positive. There are, of course, the obviously, manifestly proud, the ambitious, the assertive, the self-important, the self-sufficient. But there are negative aspects - and I use that word with regard to pride very carefully, because pride is positive whatever form it takes. It is an ugly thing. A lot of our murmuring is pride; a lot of tears are pride which we think is humility. A lot of our criticism of other people springs from pride: we think we could do better, we could go one better, setting ourselves up as the judge, the critic: pride is at the root. Very much of our poor, miserable tone is, after all, pride. Oh, how subtle and serpentine a thing this is! It is there. So the Lord has to stand back.

On the other hand, look at humility. *"To this man will I look"* - that is the beginning, the Lord even looking in anyone's direction - *"even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit"* (Isa. 66:2), and He dwells with them (Isa. 57:15). And *"the meek will he guide in judgement: and the meek will he teach his way"* (Ps. 25:9). And *"the meek shall inherit the earth"* (Matt. 5:5). It is like that all the way through; vindication is on that basis. *"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth"* (Num. 12:3): and you know when that was said at the time when his position was disputed, and God appeared at the entrance of the tabernacle and answered the challenge on the ground of the meekness of His servant. God stands by and vindicates the meek.

I say the whole Bible is founded on this issue. What a vital matter this is! Is not the Lord justified in taking any steps to clear up that situation - breaking, emptying, humbling, withholding, deferring, delaying; in any way bringing us to nought, to a place of utter dependence, where there is nothing we can rely upon at all but the Lord Himself? Is He justified? It is a tremendous process. It is a very real, very devastating work: and the very fact that we suffer so much shows how deep and real it is.

28 SEP - God's View on Man's Pride

It is not just that the Lord wants people of a certain kind and type; not just that He wants us to be of a certain nature. He created man for a great destiny, and this thing *pride* came in and made it impossible for man to fulfil that destiny. So He has secured it in a Man utterly different from us, the Lamb slain, the Man who emptied Himself, the Man who became obedient unto death, yes, such a death as the Cross, the last word in shame, in despicability and now He says to us, *"Have this mind in you"* (Phil. 2:5). I think the greatest conjunction in all the Bible is there. *"Wherefore... God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name"* (Phil. 2:9) - *"Wherefore ..."* - all that leads up to that and all that issues from that. Two vast realms of meaning and value are linked by that conjunction *"wherefore"*. But - 'this is the way the Master went'. Well, we cannot do what He did, or fulfil all that He fulfilled, but we are called to drink of the cup which was His cup.

Now this is not a word, perhaps, of great inspiration, but I feel it to be a word of very great importance. This must be true of us individually. There must also be a corporate humility. This is the way along which the Lord will commit Himself. He will never give us anything to feed our flesh, to enlarge and strengthen our natural life. He will hold us to the way that keeps us safe where that is concerned. How wonderfully the Bible becomes alive when you look at it in this way! It was Adam's sin, Israel's sin, the sin of us all. *"By reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations... that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch"* (2 Cor. 12:7); that was making a man safe for great revelation, undercutting pride.

Yes, this is an important word; it explains a lot. But let us remember that the Lord always has positive ends in view, not negative. Though His ways may seem to be destructive, even annihilating ways, He has always in view and not in the far view only, but as quickly as possible, as soon as possible that position where He can Himself let go, so to speak, His own fears, His own reserves; and say, 'I have found that to which I can give Myself without fear'. May it be like that with us.

29 SEP - The Awfulness of Pride

The whole meaning of Christ's coming into this world is bound up with the matter of pride and humility; His very coming from glory. Somewhere, somehow, before He arrived, He *"emptied himself"* (Phil. 2:7). He spoke to the Father later of the glory He had with Him before the world was (John 17:5). He had laid aside all that; He had emptied Himself. And then His strange - ah, yes, very strange until we have this key - His strange entry into this world, the circumstances of it all related to His coming and His whole time here. *"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests [lit. roosts]; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"* (Matt. 8:20). It is all this one issue. Some tremendous thing is being fought out and dealt with, some immense thing. The whole meaning of His coming, His condescension, self-emptying, birth, life, death and the whole explanation of the experiences of His people, is all centred in this one matter. The discipline, the chastening, as it is termed, the Lord's dealings with us, is centred in one thing: it is all related to the purpose for which Christ came, and how He came and how He accomplished the purpose.

And, further, the whole nature and vocation of the Church is centred in this one thing. The Church that is going to serve the eternal counsels of God will never be a Church of pride, self-glory, worldly glory, worldly power, worldly praise. It will be, ever and always, what it was at the beginning; something that the world will not look upon with praise, but will always look upon with contempt. That is essential to its vocation, for its vocation is positively to displace the world, and its temper and spirit and standards; to do something spiritually in this universe to rid it of that evil thing which has been its plague and curse from Adam onward.

It does not need any argument to show that the cause of wars, the cause of all the trouble, is pride - somewhere, somehow. No wonder then the phrase occurs: *"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"* (Rev. 13:8). This is not something subsequent, taking place late in the history of this world. From the foundation of the world the Lamb was slain.

30 SEP - The Consummating Work of the Holy Spirit

There is something that consummates relationship to Christ. Apart from that something, Christian life is largely negative or neutral, in a position or state of suspension, indefinite, tentative, as though there is something more yet to happen. The disciples had believed, but there was something yet that needed to be. That is how it works out; there is no doubt about it. There are multitudes who have believed that Jesus is the Christ, believed in the facts of His birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension, and even of His coming again, and much more of the Christian doctrine and, having believed, they have come into a certain relationship with Him; and yet there is a pause, there seems a lack of something, and as time goes on, that lack becomes more accentuated, more apparent, more real to those concerned and to others who know them. In the Church they are either negatives or neutrals, or somehow suspended, tentative. You feel that something has to happen to them, something is needed.

Paul asked a question in this form, *"Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?"* - for this is the proper translation; not, *"Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?"* which implies that some kind of relationship with Christ is possible without receiving the Holy Spirit. That seems to me to be implicit in this very question. Paul at once regarded these disciples as believers, but he had a question about them and put his question to them.

He at once sought to get to the root of it and to have it put right; and it was found to be that, though they had believed - had accepted certain truths which resulted in their accepting Jesus - they were not right out liberated, regnant, effective. Something still had to take place. Their relationship with Christ had to be in some way brought to a fullness, a completeness.

This consummation places life on an altogether new basis. Indeed, it places life upon what we call a supernatural level. There is no doubt about it in the case of those mentioned in the New Testament. Witness was borne that this does bring in supernatural features and factors, and puts life on that level. The Holy Spirit consummates relationship to Jesus Christ.

OCTOBER

1 OCT - The Supernatural Work of the Spirit

(This) brings (us) to a supernatural basis as to resources - that we are not left to our own resources, to draw only upon our own life. No, when we are at an end, that is not the end; when we are spent, that is not exhaustion. Oh, let this come to us as a real challenge! So often we take ourselves as the measure of things. 'Oh, I am so tired, I feel so bad, I do not feel I can go to the meeting', and so we stay away, taking our own condition as being all that there is to count on. There is another level on which to live, another basis; and if you like to put it to the test, if you really have received the Holy Spirit you can lay hold of the Holy Spirit in the moment of most utter weakness and find yourself capable of meeting a tremendous demand, of standing up to something for which you are totally unable in yourself. There is no place, and it is altogether wrong, for any Christian to say, 'Well, I cannot, therefore I do not try; I am made like this and I have not got this gift and that, and I have not this qualification and that' - and thus to settle down and become neutral. I am saying to you that if you have received the Holy Spirit, such an attitude is wrong and unnecessary. When the Holy Spirit is present, we are put upon a supernatural basis for resources, and we can prove again and again that when we have absolutely nothing, and it would be utter madness and folly for us to essay, we can lay hold of God the Holy Ghost and go through triumphantly and come out at the other end with more life than we had at the beginning - contrary to nature, supernatural.

I said I am talking about a fact, not a theory, of 'a second blessing'; and I can speak to you out of personal experience of the fact. I know what I am talking about. It is a fact. The Holy Spirit within does mean another level for resource, which is not just our natural level; we are not left to ourselves; so do not contemplate any proposition from the standpoint of what you are or are not in yourself. That standpoint in itself may be perfectly true; but there can be a laying hold upon the Lord by faith, saying, "*I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me*" (Phil. 4:13). You are surprised at what you can do if you know this great reality of the indwelling Spirit; you are capable of things you never thought you would ever do. It ought to be like that. That is the romance of a true life in the Spirit.

2 OCT - Have You Come Out of the Ground of the Natural Life?

There is the issue of Christ's death and resurrection into which we are placed by faith, what we have called identification with Christ in death burial and resurrection; for that is what Paul laid down in calling upon the disciples to be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. All the doctrine of identification with Christ in death and resurrection is gathered up in baptism. Dear believer, even though it be at a late hour in your life, you must get off the old ground of the old natural life. If that is governing, if that is controlling, if that is your main or sole sphere, you must get out of it, and you can only get out of it through death and resurrection.

The death of the Lord Jesus was His exodus. *"Moses and Elijah... spake of his decease (his exodus) which he was about to accomplish"* (Luke 9:31). What an exodus! Emancipation, release from all the limitations of this life as to time, space, and everything else! All those limitations broken down by His Cross! We are released by the Cross. If we really know the Cross as an experience, as something into which, by faith, we definitely stand for the end of the control, government, and limitation (as well as of all the evil) of the old natural life, and if by faith we lay hold on Christ risen, as being ourselves risen in Him, we are released.

Oh, is not that the need of so many Christians to be released, to be loosed, to be set free inside? They are tied up. We have to say of certain people, 'They are all tied up in themselves'. The Holy Spirit comes upon the ground of resurrection-union, and all the rest follows. Let us challenge our own hearts. Are we in the realm of those still tentative, still suspended, still tied up, still governed by our natural life and make-up? Then there is something wrong; and it may be in your case, as it was in mine, that after a good many years of believing, of being the Lord's servant, the thing happened. I am always hesitant to say that I received the Holy Spirit then, because that would be to state a kind of doctrine to which everybody else ought to conform; but I know the thing happened. The day I apprehended in a new way the meaning of Christ in death, burial and resurrection, the Holy Spirit followed on that and did something in me. It has been going on increasingly ever since and still has to go a very long way, but that was the turning point.

3 OCT - The Paramount Issue of Life and Death

The main issue in the Testimony of Jesus, in and through and by His Blood, is the issue of life and death, or death and life. That is the main issue. Oh, do follow me closely, for you will see in a moment some of the great content of this thing. The main issue in the Testimony of Jesus as by the Blood of Jesus is the issue of LIFE AND DEATH. If the Lord's people recognized that enough, they would have their ground set and fixed, they would know exactly what their business is in the world, and they would have a full explanation of all that which they meet in the spiritual realm when they become related to the Testimony of Jesus. IT IS THE ISSUE OF LIFE AND DEATH. It is not only of sin and sanctification, and it is not only the issue of an old man and a new man, but in all that, and over all that, and around all that is the far bigger issue, the issue of life and death. And until this main issue is recognized, the whole question of sin, and of the new man, and the new race, and the bringing in of the new creation, and of the escape of men and women from the power of Satan unto God could never be. You will be held up until you recognize the main issue.

Where does the whole question of sanctification begin? Where does the whole question of a new creation begin? Where does the whole question of the emancipation of souls from the grip of Satan begin? It all begins at the place where the power of death is met. It is not sins with which you and I are contending, nor merely with the old creation. We can be locked up and bound and tied by the absorption and obsession with our old man and never get anywhere. We can be locked up and tied hand and foot with all kinds of truth and teaching about sanctification, the question of sins or sin specifically, and get nowhere because we are not recognizing the main issue. The main issue is death, the power of death, and we have got to come to that central issue of the Blood of the Lord Jesus - the question of life and death. That is the Cross at its heart. Unless the Lord had settled that issue once and for all in His Blood in the Cross then all other matters would have failed entirely and there would have been no complete Gospel.

Then, that being the Cross and the content of the Cross, we see what the Testimony of Jesus is in essence. It is the Testimony to life, making possible a new creation. That Testimony, when it really is recognized at its centre, is a Testimony concerning life which is brought into being upon the basis of death being destroyed, death having its power broken, and him that had the power of death being nullified.

When that Testimony comes into being, and it is recognized, and anyone enters into that Testimony and makes that their testimony, what happens? Immediately the murderer is brought out - he who, as the Lord Himself said, was a "*murderer from the beginning*", always has acted in that capacity towards any who

were called into the Testimony of Jesus, whether in the Old Testament or in the New.

4 OCT - The Faith of the Saints of Old

Hebrews Chapter 11 gives us a remarkable account of the Old Testament saints. As a result of their faith they came to a place where they could and did believe for something which must eventuate; though in many cases, in the majority of cases, it never did eventuate in their lifetime. But the great statement here in this chapter is that this made no difference. They had come to such a position with the Lord, in this knowing of Him, that they could all die not having received the promises. All died in faith. You see, they did not even at the last have the stimulus of seeing the thing materializing; but they were able to die in faith. It may be somewhat easier to live in faith, if by that you mean that you expect the thing to be realized in your lifetime. But the essence of faith is 'This must be! It is a part of God, it is God Himself, and whether I live to see it or not, that makes no difference to faith; it will be! And I live now, not to see it in my lifetime, but I live now in relation to it to be realized at some time in the purpose and intention of God'.

Then we have a further wonderful statement. They received not the promises, they died in faith, but they looked on, they looked on to us. Faith carried them beyond their own lifetime, and the statement is that they could not *"be made perfect"*. That word 'perfect' is very interesting. It simply means they could not come to the consummation, the full growth of their faith. That thing could not reach its ultimate end until we came in. It demanded us. They, apart from us, could not reach the consummation of their faith; and faith goes on and sees that there are yet things to be brought in by God for the realization of that which is in our hearts, for which we are living, for which we are labouring, for which we are suffering, for which we are being patient. Faith goes right on to the end and says, 'It may not be in my time; there may be more things to be brought in yet to make the consummation possible, but eventually, my faith in God will be vindicated, and the thing will be realized!'

Faith is a big thing, a comprehensive thing, and a real purity of faith means we do not just live to see things in our time, so that, should there be any doubt about our seeing them in our time, faith would go out. That is not the essence of faith at all. We have to have an after-life faith, a long view faith, which is not made less active because the prospect of a full realization in our time begins to be overshadowed. That is the basis and nature of faith here.

5 OCT - The Faith That Takes Us Onwards

Twice in Chapter 11 of Hebrews it is said that by their faith they received a good report. The elders received a good report (v. 2). Then, toward the end, it says they all received a good report (v. 39). What is a good report? You know in the next chapter, Chapter 12, we are children at school, children of a family. Father is dealing with us as with sons, and it is all part of this whole argument: *My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord* and so on. It is all for this good report. I do not believe that it is true in the case of those referred to in Chapter 11 that the good report related to what they achieved, what clever people they were, what they were able to do in their lifetime. That was not the good report. What is the report for? No, it was not because they achieved so many wonderful things. The good report was this: they trusted in the Lord and did their utmost through faith.

They did not say, Oh, well, this will never be realized in our lifetime; we shall never be able to see this done; it is no use! It needs better people than we are! No, they faced the whole thing, and saw that, in the main, the thing was humanly impossible. Only God could do it. But that did not make them sit back and say, Oh, I can never be in this, and never have a part in this: I can never be of any use in this! No, they believed God, they trusted the Lord, and then they put themselves right into it with all their hearts and lived in a positive trust in God. They did all that faith could lead them and make them to do. Faith is always an active thing. The good report was that they trusted the Lord and got down to it, gave themselves to it, however difficult things were.

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

6 OCT - Refusing To Compromise with the World

In the very first chapter of the book of Daniel, he and his brethren determined that they would not defile themselves with the king's dainties, nor with the wine from the king's table; and that is how they spoke of it when they went to Arioch, the king's representative, to plead their case. They asked - you would think hardly tactfully or diplomatically! - 'that they might not defile themselves'. It is hardly complimentary, at any rate, to speak so of food from the king's table. They pressed this matter of defilement. They had seen the principle that by this means they and their testimony would in some way be compromised. It was a link with this world and with Satan's kingdom as in this world, and the effect of it would be - oh, how inclusive and comprehensive this is! - that they would be denying in their very persons the all sufficiency of the Lord. If they were to go the way of the world and look like the people of the world, where would be the testimony of the Lord? If they did not go the way of the world and were to refuse to have any kind of compromise with the world, there would be great opportunity for the Lord to prove that He can go one better than the world, and is more than all the world put together.

This is the challenge. On various grounds and by various arguments, young people especially are tempted to compromise on this point. They think they will gain influence with people of the world by coming down to their level and doing as they do, thus getting on an even footing with the world; but they do not recognize that such a course so often involves compromise. More rarely still do they recognize that when God's people are going to the world for their sustenance and nourishment and pleasure and gratification and so on, it results in a question being cast upon the ability of the Lord to prove how far greater He is than this world. The bad spiritual state of the people in Daniel's day was wholly due to their being in bondage to the world. Daniel and his brethren would have none of it. They stood apart in complete separation from the world, its standards, its ideas and all its resources, to give God the opportunity of proving that He is better than the world, and His servants, by His grace, better than the men of the world. That is the testimony, and until that is true, we have no authority, no ascendancy, no real testimony. Separation therefore, unpleasant and hard as the word may sound, is a very fundamental matter if we mean by it that we are separated unto the Lord, that He may show by means of us that this world is a poor thing compared with what we have in Him.

7 OCT - The False and the True Life

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal 2:20

What is the declaration contained within that statement? The essence of the utterance is this: There is a life which is not man's natural life, which is not original human life, but is a peculiar, particular, unique life; it is the life of God Himself. That very life of God, eternal, incorruptible, indestructible, divine life, is the life which it is the Lord's will for every one of His children to possess. There the whole of the Christian life has its beginning, its spring. What is the Gospel? What is the Christian life? It is not Judaism taking on the title of Christianity. It is not Christianity taking hold of Judaism. It is the possessing of God's own divine life. Anything short of that is not the Gospel! Paul here says that this life is the very foundation and basis of a true Christian experience, and it means this: *It is no longer I, but Christ living in me.*

That is set right over against Judaism, which was all external, outward. This is inward. *"Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live..."* Well, Paul, how did you become possessed of that life? In what way did you come into that great reality of Christ living in you? *"I have been crucified with Christ!"* What did that mean, Paul? That meant that Judaism had to go; I was steeped in Judaism, far more than any other of my brethren, the apostles, Jews as they were. I excelled in my zeal for the Jewish faith; but when I saw the Lord Jesus, and when I saw the meaning of Christ crucified, that which had been my very life (Judaism) became as nothing. He became my life, and that other ceased to have any meaning for me! Paul is here setting the life of Judaism, which is no life, over against the life of the indwelling Christ, which is the life.

What is it to be a Christian? It is to receive God's very life in Christ into the innermost place in our being. *"Christ liveth in me, and that life which I now live..."* You cannot substitute that. There is nothing which can take the place of that. And yet there are those who think that if they go to meetings, and keep up their religious forms and observances, it is all well. It is not all well! That is the devil's lie! Any religious system which is a substitute for the indwelling Christ is an accursed thing, by reason of its very effect.

8 OCT - Has the World Been Crucified to You?

"But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Gal 6:14

The cross again is in the forefront. The apostle is saying here that his glorying is in the cross of the Lord Jesus, and that cross has represented for him his being crucified to the world and the world to him. Of course, that is a very inclusive, comprehensive statement, and embraces a very great deal, but there is a particular application of it, or a particular usage of the statement here. These Judaisers had gone to Galatia, and had sought to make Jewish proselytes of these Christian believers by having them circumcised, so that they might append these Gentile believers to the Jewish church.

As we have noticed, the point of their approach was this: If you do that, a great deal of persecution will cease. You will come into a realm of tolerance; at present you are outside everything that is recognized and accepted, and all the world is against you. Come into the fold. Come into the accepted system of things, and you will have an easy time.

What was behind it? Paul says their object is simply to count heads, to *"glory in your flesh"*, to say: See how many proselytes we are making! See how many converts we have got! No wonder Paul writes with heat, lest these Judaisers should glory on their side in their success, and then that these Galatians should discover that these people were only glorying on the ground of their having forfeited their high position.

What does Paul mean? It does not matter to me what the world thinks! It does not matter one wit to me the attitude the world takes! Let it persecute! Let it say what it likes! Let the world defame. Let the world misrepresent. Let the world lie. Let the whole accepted religious system say what it likes. I have been crucified to this world! I am dead to all that, and that is dead to me! The cross of the Lord Jesus means the emancipation from the world in that sense.

We shall have to decide, once and for all, as definitely as Calvary was a once and for all thing, that we are not going to be influenced or deterred one little bit in our utterness of abandonment to the Lord by what the world (even the religious world) says and does. When we recognize that, there will be triumph.

9 OCT - The Flesh and the New Nature

"And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof." Gal 5:24

What Paul is saying, in effect, is this: It is all very well to accept the law; all very well to get back into the externals of religion; but does that deal with the moral issue? The sin question was a thing kept perpetually in view in the old order; it was never finally dealt with. If you had watched Israel round that tabernacle, and seen the continuous stream of sacrifices, and the veritable river of blood daily flowing in the court of that tabernacle, you would have known that sin was not once and for all dealt with. You would have known that the sin question was always in view. It does not deal with our very natures. It is a false peace that is merely based upon a system of outward religious activities. It is a false peace if it is not found in the precious, eternal efficacy of the Blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanseth us from all sin.

By way of the cross there is a new nature, a nature introduced which gets the upper hand of the old. The old is there, but it is not now reigning. Sin has not dominion. There is another nature which rises up and meets the old. Something has happened, and in that something a position has been reached which is just this: that old nature is no longer the master. It has been crucified. It has been put into the place where it no longer dominates. It has come under the veto of the cross. How does it work? By the positive fact of a new nature introduced, the divine nature in Christ. It is not a constant effort to suppress the old, a struggle to say, No! It is that there is a positive factor which is working for us against the old. It does not mean that never at any time do we make a mistake, perhaps a slip, but we do know that there is a reactionary power at work within us now, which registers upon that old a veto and says with strength: "*Thou shalt not*". It is a new law, not imposed from without but the law of an inward power, a new nature within. As we walk in the Spirit that new nature grows and increases, and more and more gets the ascendancy over the old. Conformity to the image of God's Son is going on: a growing, an increase in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

10 OCT - Learning the Secret as Paul Learned

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me."
Philippians 4:11-13

If there is one statement in Scripture that finds us out, it is this one. It was Paul who said it; but I wonder how many of us could say it, with the same positive affirmation? You will notice, however, that the Apostle is stating it as the result of a life-long schooling. 'This', he says, 'is the issue of my schooling with Christ. I have learned the secret. *"I have learned... I know... I can do..."!*

The course of things is learning through experience, and thus coming to knowledge - knowledge which is not theory at all, but which works out in practice: *"I can do"*. That is the meaning for us of life with Christ. If we, His children, want to know the meaning of our experiences in this very exacting school, for it is an exacting school: we don't get away with anything; nothing escapes; we are held to it, severely and strictly, though behind all is wisdom and love. The meaning of our experiences in the exacting school which the Christian life is, and is intended to be, it is that we may LEARN, that we may KNOW, that we may DO. God's end is always a practical end, and the end is DOING. *'I have learned... I know... I can do!'*

And, of course, the way to that end is learning that you CANNOT do, and that you do NOT know. I suppose that that is the truest thing that could be said of anyone in the School of the Spirit. The thing that they are learning is that they cannot do, and they do not know. That is the way. It does seem, on the one hand, a negative process; it does seem to be an undoing experience; but God's ends are always positive. And an absolute necessity to our arriving at the position, *"I can do all things"* - a tremendous statement! - which is His will for every one of us, is a deep, fundamental consciousness and realization of how bankrupt we are of knowledge and of ability apart from Christ. For the all-governing clause or fragment is: *'in Him that is, in Christ who strengthens me'*.

11 OCT - Looking At Christ and Not At the Situation

You see, it is a question of a positive attitude toward things, is it not? It makes such a difference, the attitude that we take. *"I have learned..."* I have learned the secret; I have made everything yield something of a positive character. The result is: *"I know..."* I know how to be abased, to be set at nought, to be walked over, trampled upon, ignored, regarded as worthless; I know how to take hold of that, how not to go down under it, but to make it serve spiritual ends. I know how to abound: when people are kind and good when, as you Philippians, they send me gifts, so that I can say, *"I have all things, and abound"* I do not get proud and uppish, and conceited and self-sufficient, and think myself something: I know that is ruination! I have learned the perils of prosperity just as much as the perils of adversity; I have found the secret. And so, come what may, for or against; be as I may be and I am today in prison at the end of my life, *I can!* I do not say *after* all this, I cannot bear any more; but *I can do all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me.*'

I pass on this message, not as an elaborate address or discourse, but as a word from my heart. It is a challenge to us all as to our attitude. Our natural condition which is not mere imagination, but undoubtedly something very real would so often argue: 'I cannot! The situation is utterly disconcerting, utterly devastating, both inside and outside. Naturally, it is the end: it is paralysis; I cannot, I just cannot.' That is the situation, if we just look at ourselves, if we in ourselves represent the sum-total of everything. If we look at the situation, that argues finality; we may as well give it up and say: I cannot, I cannot! But what about Christ? Is there not another off-look from ourselves to *'Christ who strengthens me'*? This is not a question of a psychological effect upon ourselves in trying to be more cheerful, and to make ourselves believe something that is not true. There are the facts in ourselves, and perhaps in our circumstances: they ARE the FACTS, they are stark facts, and there is no getting away from them.

12 OCT - Getting Hold of the Impossible

There is a greater fact than ourselves and than our circumstances: it is the fact of *Christ*. And so you and I will have to seek from the Lord this grace, morning by morning, and day by day, perhaps even hour by hour, as we face our own inability and disability, our own utter futility and helplessness, to have the grace to say: Nevertheless, I can through Christ. I say again, it is not just a psychological reaction, or fillip (stimulus), which will make us ignore facts. No! This is the act of faith; this is the link of faith; this is the plank of faith, across which we pass right over from ourselves and our condition to Christ. And today, when we are as weak, as helpless, as overwhelmed, as perplexed, as distracted by things as ever, nevertheless, today and tomorrow, and all the days, I CAN - I CAN THROUGH CHRIST! If it is real faith in Christ, you will find that the Spirit comes in, and enables you to do what you never would have done, or could have done, but for that positive attitude. May we be helped to find the way of deliverance from the 'I cannot... I cannot... I cannot...' into the '*I can do all things through Christ.*'

No doubt, with many this represents a very practical situation. As we look on ahead, we dread some things, for we know that those things are beyond us altogether; but we have got to take this position. We must look at our situation today, and say: 'This situation holds something. The Lord is not answering my prayer and getting me out of it; He is not changing it, He is just not doing all that I am longing for, and praying for, and craving for. I pray, and there is nothing; there is no getting through; He is not doing it. Therefore, I must look at it in another way. There is a secret in this, and I have got to get hold of that secret. What does the Lord intend to teach me and to give me in this situation, that I can bring out of it as fruit, as stock-in-trade for the work in the days to come? What is it? I must get it!'

If we take that attitude toward things, I think we shall probably find that that is our way of deliverance, our way out, our way through. Let us ask for grace to do this, not only now, in our present situation, but as to everything that the Lord may require of us in the future - perhaps things that we never thought of. While we may never rise to such eminence, or become great historic figures, nevertheless, through Christ things can be, which would go far beyond any dreams that we ever had, more than we ever thought.

13 OCT - The Frown of God's Goodwill

Strangely enough, the very goodwill of God is often hidden behind a frown. I turn to my friend John Bunyan. You know that he had a man called *Goodwill*. He lived at the wicket gate, and Christian's first contact with Goodwill was when he came to the gate. He saw the notice written up, "*Knock and it shall be opened*", and he knocked and the man opened. It was Goodwill. But how is he described? "A very grave person called Goodwill".

We often think God's goodwill in terms of being boisterous, hilarious, hearty, and a jovial sort of person who was just falling over you with beneficence and everything light and helpful and cheerful. But in John Bunyan's story it was a very grave person that Christian met when he met Goodwill at the wicket gate. And, the gate having been opened to him somewhat, and seeing this very grave person and being asked what he wanted and giving his reply, he was suddenly laid hold of by Goodwill with a terrible grasp and pulled in so strongly that he might almost have been torn to pieces. Anything but goodwill, it seemed! Christian did not expect that, and he turned to the man and said, 'Why did you do that?' 'Oh', he said, 'Beelzebub has a castle just over there, and he is always watching for pilgrims coming, so that he can shoot them down before they get through the gate. He was going to shoot you down, so I pulled you in'. Sometimes we need rough handling, and it does not mean it is not goodwill.

This is the marvelous shrewdness and honesty of Bunyan. Why was Goodwill a very grave person? Because of the aspects of the wicket gate. It looked down the way to the city of Destruction; and Goodwill had constantly in full view all that was going on down there - the souls perishing and going to perdition. He saw the castle of Beelzebub, and the malignant eyes watching for pilgrims, to shoot them down before they could get through; he knew this hatred, this malice of the Evil One; and with all the goodwill in the world he could not but be a grave person in the light of that. And as he saw on, he saw the way the pilgrims were going. He knew what they would encounter. He knew all that they had to meet. He knew all the rest of the story contained in that wonderful *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was not always progress as we think of it, for we make progress very often by falls, by mistakes. There are Giants of Despair, and there are deep and dark valleys, and there are many other things. Goodwill stands looking in all directions, taking in everything, but he is still Goodwill.

14 OCT - The Father's Good Pleasure

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."
Luke 12:32

God has never promised that we should be exempt from these perils and these dangers. He has not said, 'You will never suffer, you will never be tried'. No. He has promised us nothing short of: *"In the world ye have tribulation"* (John 16:33). But He has said, 'When these things come, do not forget that it is never to be interpreted as indicating that I am disposed toward you otherwise than in this way of goodwill, good pleasure'.

We have to meet, then, our difficulties and go through our trials and believe that in them God's will is good and perfect and acceptable. It is all in the good pleasure of His will. And is it not true that it just works out like that? We sometimes feel, 'Oh, that it might never have been, that this might never have been', and afterward we say, 'God meant it for good; the outcome is good, not evil; I did not see it, I could not see it, but it was the good pleasure of His will'. *"It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"*. Rough handling but it is good will. Many an adversity, but the goodwill is looking over it all and following the whole course. I can say this out of my own coward heart that knows only too well what it means to wonder whether the will of God is always good. The Gospel begins with goodwill, and it develops and unfolds to a vast fullness encompassing all ages the good pleasure of His will.

So He says, *"little flock"*. He immediately, in so saying, admitted that His flock would be very small in comparison. They would be very full of suffering, because they were going the way of the Lamb, 'following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth'. A *"little flock"*. But 'fear not, small, despised, persecuted flock; fear not!' In the midst of all that comes upon the world, remember, it is the Lamb who has everything in hand, and He has it all in hand with a view to having with Him the company of which we read in Revelation 14: *"It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"*. It is *"the good pleasure of his will"*.

15 OCT - God's Thought is to Redeem a Family

Dear friends, it is a good thing to be redeemed, to have what redemption means in the sense of sins forgiven, deliverance from bondage, security unto eternal life, and all those blessings. But do we sufficiently recognize that it is a FAMILY He has come to redeem, and that we are redeemed as a family? We may be redeemed individually, but God's thought, and Christ's thought, was to redeem a family.

What is a family? Now, if you have a family, how happy and pleased would you be if every one of your children was a unit in himself or herself, living an independent life without any concern or consideration or interest in any other member of the family? Just so many isolated units in one place could not be called a home! Would you be happy about it if they all went off and never had any concern for the other members, but were just individuals? Well, they might be children of the same parents, but, if that was the situation, the parents would feel that the real meaning of parenthood had been lost - how God must feel about anything and everything that is other than a family concept and a family spirit amongst His people!

We hear so much about the Church, the churches and the local assemblies. Indeed, we can get very tired of that, for it can be so technical. But what is God's thought in companies of His people in any place? That they should be a representation of the family where His Fatherhood is the dominant thing, where His Son has the place that He ought to have, and where all are a unit. *"I pray... that they may all be one"* (John 17:20-21). How? *'As Thou, Father, and I are one.'* The Father is revealing Himself in the Son and the Son is manifesting Himself in the Father. What perfect oneness there is between those two! *"That they may be one, even as we are one."*

The prayer of the Lord Jesus, right at the end, as He went to the Cross, was for the family. He went to the Cross to redeem the family, that out of His death and resurrection many sons should be born.

16 OCT - Jesus Came to Redeem a Family unto God

The Lord Jesus came, firstly to secure unto the Father the satisfaction of His eternal desire, the realization of His own ambition of heart, to redeem unto God a family; and not to leave it there, but to bring that family to reign, to govern in the eternal kingdom. It is to be the governmental family of the ages to come. The means by which He is going to govern this world in the coming ages is by this family elevated to His throne. The far greater and more glorious counterpart of David and Solomon is the Father and Son - and then, to use another phrase from the Letter to the Hebrews, "*many sons*" whom He has brought to glory.

We cannot just say these things without reminding ourselves that the realization of this, both on the part of the Lord Jesus and on our part, if the Father is to find His satisfaction, is a costly thing. It is by way of travail. There is no family without travail. God has put it in the very constitution of this creation that the family is by way of travail, of suffering. In a word, someone has to be prepared to lay down their life for the family, and the Lord Jesus did it. And, dear friends, we are not going to have anything like this amongst the Lord's people unless we are prepared to suffer for it, to lay down our lives for it, to set aside all our own personal interests for it, really to put up with a lot, that we might bring to the Father that upon which His heart is so much set. It is the way of travail, of sacrifice, of suffering. For this His Body was broken, that we might share that Body as one family. For this His Blood was shed, that we might, in drinking His blood - in other words, His outpoured life - share as a family that one life.

'Father, the world has not known, but these have known... Father, as Thou and I are one... that they may be one.'

Have you been all the time poised and adjusted, asking: 'Is the Lord saying something to me? Somewhere, somehow, I have violated this family spirit, family disposition, and grieved the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of the family.' Is there something that He is saying to you and to me? How does this apply to us? Is it just a lovely Bible theme? God forbid! It was a prayer with Him, so let us make it a prayer, and a prayer that will have a very practical aspect, for sometimes we can go a long way towards answering our own prayers. And this matter is not ALL to be left with the Lord. He has done His part!

17 OCT - Seeing Christ by Revelation

Now, the Resurrection and Pentecost seem to me to have meant just this one thing, the seeing of Christ. You remember when He was considered dead and buried, even disciples were in black despair and eclipsed of faith and hope, and some went on the way to Emmaus very sad indeed; and their words were, "*We hoped that it was He Who should redeem Israel*" (Luke 24:21). But before the end of that episode was reached, we are told that He opened their understanding that they might know the Scriptures. Having taken up the Scriptures right from the beginning and spoken to them things concerning Himself, He opened their understanding, and it was just that that was marking His appearances during the forty days after His resurrection.

They were in some altogether new way coming to see Him. Oh no, not now physically merely that He was alive, that He had a body; it was not merely this that was being borne in upon them very powerfully. They were seeing Him Who He was; the mystery of His Person was breaking down. They were seeing *Him*, and the day of Pentecost seemed to bring that through to full birth. The forty days were moving up to that day, and then on that day by the coming of the Holy Spirit the thing was consummated, and in the full blaze of Who He was, the Church was born. It seems to me that the Church was born, yes, by the Holy Spirit, but by the Holy Spirit's breaking open to men who Jesus was after all. It seems to me that is how everyone came into the Church. They saw by an operation of the Holy Spirit Who Jesus was. That is how Paul came in on the Damascus road; he saw who Jesus of Nazareth was. On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up with the Eleven, as under the power of the Holy Spirit they opened their mouths, and the spontaneous declaration was all about Who Jesus was, and they are men in a new revelation.

The disciples went out in the power of having seen, having had their eyes opened to the Lord Jesus. It was as though they had been men moving in the shadows during those years, groping, sometimes feeling an assurance, a certain amount of certainty, but then questionings, uncertainties coming in, shadows all the time. But at last the heavens were rent, the blaze broke through, and they saw. It was in the light of that they were constituted witnesses, representatives. It was in the light of that that the Church was born. It was in the light of that that the Church went on its way so effectively. The fact was that wherever they came, it was the impact of God in Christ by their presence. Their presence stirred hell, because hell felt anew *God is here!*

18 OCT - God's Answer to Declension

Why was the Gospel of John written? Was it written just as a record of the life of the Lord Jesus here on earth to go alongside of two or three other records, that there might be a history of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus preserved? What was the object in view? Well, just this: as John writes, things are not as they were, not as God meant them to be; they no longer represent God's thought in and for His people. The order, the heavenly order, has broken down and is breaking down yet more. The heavenly nature has been forfeited and an earthly thing is taking shape in Christianity; the true life is being lost and the glory is departing. To that situation God reacts with a new presentation of His Son in a heavenly and spiritual way; for the features or characteristics of John are *heavenliness* and *spirituality*. Is that not true? Oh yes, here is a new bringing into view of His Son. But what a bringing into view! Not just and only as Jesus of Nazareth, but as the Son of Man, Son of God; God revealed and manifested in man, out from eternity with all the fullness of Divine essence that His people might see.

So we must get to the Holy Spirit's standpoint in the Gospel by John, and in his other writings, and just see this, that God's way of recovery, when His full and original thought has been lost and that heavenly revelation has departed, and the heavenly glory has been withdrawn, is to bring His Son anew into view; not to bring you back to the technique of the Church or the Gospel or the doctrine, but to bring *His Son* into view, to bring Christ again in the tremendousness of His heavenly and spiritual meaning before the heart-eyes of His people. That is the answer that is found in John to these conditions that we meet with in the New Testament, which so plainly shows that the Church was losing its heavenly position, and all sorts of things were coming in, and the whole thing was becoming earthly. What will God do? In what way will He save His purpose which seems to be so dangerously near being lost? He will bring His Son into view again. Remember God's answer is always in His Son to every movement. Whether that movement be in the world as it heads up to Antichrist (God's answer to Antichrist will be Christ in the full blaze of His Divine glory), or whether it be in the Church in declension and apostasy, God's answer will be in His Son.

19 OCT - KNOWING CHRIST

It is not possible to have or know anything of all the fullness which God has shut up in His Son without the Holy Spirit's revelation of that in an inward way. It has to be a miracle wrought by the Holy Spirit within every man and woman if they are to know anything of what God has shut up in Christ. That again summarizes John's Gospel, for there at the centre is a man born blind. He never has seen. It is not a case of restoration with him; it is a giving of sight. It is the first thing. It is going to be an absolutely new world for that man. Whatever he may have surmised or guessed or imagined, or had described to him, actual seeing is going to be something with a new beginning. It is going to be an absolute miracle, producing an absolutely new world, and all his guesses of what that world contained and was like will prove to have been very inadequate when he actually sees. Nothing is going to be seen save by the miracle wrought within.

(1) God has shut up everything of Himself in His Son.

(2) No one can know anything of that save as it is revealed. *"No one knoweth the Son, save the Father, neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him"* (Matt 11:27). Revelation can only come by choice of the Son.

... God always keeps the revelation of Himself in Christ bound up with practical situations. I want you to get that. God *always* keeps the revelation of Himself in Christ bound up with practical situations. You and I can never get revelation other than in connection with some necessity. We cannot get it by studying. When the Lord gave the manna in the wilderness (type of Christ as the bread from heaven) He stipulated very strongly that not one fragment more than the day's need was to be gathered, and that if they went beyond the measure of immediate need, disease and death would break out and overtake them. The principle, the law, of the manna is that God keeps revelation of Himself in Christ bound up with practical situations of necessity, and we are not going to have revelation as mere teaching, doctrine, interpretation, theory, or anything as *a thing*, which means that God is going to put you and me into situations where only the revelation of Christ can help us and save us.

20 OCT - Revelation Bound Up with Practical Solutions

You notice that the Apostles got their revelation for the Church in practical situations. They never met around a table to have a Roundtable Conference, to draw up a scheme of doctrine and practice for the churches. They went out into the business and came right up against the desperate situation, and in the situation which pressed them, oftentimes to desperation, they had to get before God and get revelation. The New Testament is the most practical book, because it was born out of pressing situations. The Lord gave light for a situation. The revelation of Christ, we might say, in emergencies is the way to keep Christ alive, and the only way in which Christ really does live to His own. You understand what I mean.

Now then, that is why the Lord would keep us in situations which are acute, real. The Lord is against our getting out on theoretical lines with truth, out on technical lines. Oh, let us shun technique as a thing in itself and recognize this, that, although the New Testament has in it a technique, we cannot merely extract the technique and apply it. We have to come into New Testament situations to get a revelation of Christ to meet that situation. So that the Holy Spirit's way with us is to bring us into living, actual conditions and situations, and needs, in which only some fresh knowledge of the Lord Jesus can be our deliverance, our salvation, our life, and then to give us, not a revelation of truth, but a revelation of the Person, new knowledge of the Person, that we come to see Christ in some way that just meets our need. We are not drawing upon an 'it', but upon a 'Him'.

He is the Word. "*In the beginning was the Word*", and the meaning of that designation is just this, that God has made Himself intelligible to us in a Person, not in a book. God has not first of all written a book, although we have the Bible. God has written a *Person*. In one of his little booklets, Dr. A. B. Simpson has this illustration, or illustrates this thing in this way. He says that on one occasion he saw the Constitution of the United States written, and it was written on a parchment. He was near to it, and could read all the details of the Constitution of the United States. But as he stood back from that parchment, some yards off, all he could see was the head of George Washington there on the parchment. Then he drew near again and saw the Constitution was so written in light and shadow as to take the shape of the head of George Washington. That is it. God has written the revelation of Himself, but it is in the Person of His Son, the Headship of the Lord Jesus, and you cannot have the constitution of heaven except in *the Person*, and the constitution of heaven is the Person in the shape of God's Son.

21 OCT - One Universal Spiritual Remedy

It is quite clear that every letter written by the Apostle Paul has some maladies as the occasion of it. That is to say there were things that were wrong in every place to which the letters were written, and that needed to be put right. The outstanding case is Corinth. The disorders and diseases there both individual and collective were many and great. While the Apostle referred to these specifically... and rebuked, reprov'd, exhorted, and warned concerning them... he knew quite well that they could never be cleared up as things in themselves. It was of no use to try to get a solution by discussion, debate, logic, personal persuasion, or threat. Very early in the first letter to them, his one all-covering Remedy is announced, or prescribed:

"I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ... and Him crucified."

In other words, Paul's finally settled position was that a passion for Jesus Christ in terms of His Cross - that is in terms of love: the letting go of all personal interest, the yielding of all natural mindedness - will solve every problem and cure, every malady. Paul believed that if he could get those believers to become really captivated by a concern for Christ as the objective of an ever increasing devotion and self-surrender, all the evils and hurtful things would fade out. If something more than the initial and basic personal advantages of salvation were to fill the heart, so many of the unhappy conditions in individual and corporate Christian life would disappear. That is to say, if the Lordship of Christ were to be given its place and His fullness were to be the governing goal, life would be ever rising in ascendancy above the low level and be enlarging beyond the small and petty measure which is characteristic of so many.

Oh, for the ability to show how the Lordship of Christ in a life or in a church, and in all the churches, is the solution to every problem and difficulty! Will you ask the Lord to impress you firstly with this fact... and then to lead you into its reality. To this ministry, by His grace... and as helped by your prayers... we give ourselves until we with all saints *"attain unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."*

22 OCT - Your Sin Will Find You Out

You may have the life of the two and a half tribes if you so desire, but you will never come into the governmental position, the meaning of the throne. What is more, the former will always prove to have been less than what God purposes, and the knowledge of it must sooner or later find us out. Was it not in that very connection the Lord's servant said, "be sure your sin will find you out." That is not to say, 'Be sure your sin will be found out.' It *will* find you out. What is the meaning of that? Sometime or other you will come to say: 'Well, I was a fool! I might have had far more than I have. God intended me to have it. This that I have is proving, after all, to be much less than what God called me unto.' You will exclaim, just as Saul exclaimed, 'I have played the fool!' That is your sin finding you out. It is bound to come to that, to the recognition that God purposed much more than we, because of the conflict and the suffering involved, were prepared to accept.

However, the Lord will have a company in governmental fellowship with Himself. He will sift, and sift again, but He will have that company; and it is for us to recognize the fact that He has made that known to us. That is a matter of importance. Just pigeon-hole all the questions and problems that arise about others who have not had it made known to them, and face the fact that He has made it known to us. As Sovereign, God can do as He likes about these matters. He has made known to some (not to us alone) in the earth what is His full end, and the making of it known has constituted His call, His voice. When God has made known to us His mind we are left at once with a great responsibility; but I think, if we did but know it, we are even then in a peculiarly blessed position, although it does not always look like it.

23 OCT - The Cause of Arrested Spiritual Development

The Apostle Paul was convinced that it was not because of any particular "problems" that the growth of the Corinthian church was arrested but that which lay behind them and much more. They were occupied with the externals of the faith both as to personal, domestic and church affairs. The Apostle goes to the heart of things and makes it perfectly clear that their trouble was arrested spiritual development. Thus he mentions some of the symptoms which prove this. The first one was partisanship. They had men in their eye. Human selection, favor, preference issuing from temperamental reactions caused them to "hive off," form circles; parties around the mannerism, 'line of things,' or make-up of this man and that. Some would prefer the mystical and poetical to the practical; others the opposite. Some would take up with the subjective line of things and decline the objective and vice versa; and so on and on. Then there would be the men themselves with what was liked and what was disliked. Concerning all this, the Apostle says *"I could not speak as unto spiritual but as unto babes, I fed you with milk"* (3:1, 2). The fundamental fault with all this was that with them the Lord Jesus had not become pre-eminent; it was not Him always in view, to whom they gathered, whom they were seeking.

It was not a matter of what of the Lord Jesus had this one and that one to impart. It was the vessel not the treasure; the channel not the stream. In effect the Apostle says that it is a mark of real spiritual growth and maturity when the Lord's people are not influenced by the instrument as such, but have their hearts directed toward Himself, and are asking all the time, "What has this one and that one of the Lord?" So in this matter as in all others the remedy presented is a putting of the Lord Jesus in His place, which is the supreme place, and the place which excludes all human obtrusions, for or against.

The heads of these Corinthians were projected toward the servants of the Lord instead of their hearts being set on the Master. Divisions are so often childish, and when looked at from a point of greater spiritual advancement, are seen to be so. Then it is perfectly clear that human elements played all too great a part, and if only the Lord Himself had been the dominating reality and object of concern, things would have been different.

24 OCT - The Unattractive Thing: Obedience

No one naturally likes that word. It is unpleasant from infancy onward. Its very essence seems to imply the presence of - at least a peril of - disobedience, and the universal natural dislike of it more than implies - it proves the presence of a wish to be free from any obligation or law. Yes, that primeval revolt, and break from God which was the beginning of actual sin has entered as the Serpent's poison into the very blood-stream of the entire creation, and the very mention of obedience stirs a secret dislike, if not resentment.

It would take too much space to show how, through all time, the one thing which has been God's supreme obstacle to man's relationship with Himself has been this inherent disobedience as the active expression of unbelief. On the other hand, it would take volumes to show fully how every movement into fellowship with God in His great purposes has been based upon a demanded obedience of faith; a test, a challenge and a conflict issuing in a willing capitulation to the Divine will in some general or particular direction. Here, our only intention is to point out and emphasize the fact that there is no possibility of the slightest true and genuine spiritual progress and growth beyond the point where light received, the Lord showing His mind, has not had a definite response in practical obedience. Time does not change this, and no matter how long we go on or imagine that the matter is passed over, when at length the real question of approval for particular usefulness arises, we shall be brought right back to the hindrance of that reserved obedience.

But there is a realm of obedience which is not law but love, and love transforms the unlovely to delight. Hence the Apostle Paul, in calling for an obedience which would make possible a spiritual enlargement, puts the matter on the basis of love, and then gives the supreme Example of the obedience of love. "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ, Who... became obedient*" (Phil. 2:5). It is those whose love for the Lord leads to swift actions in relation to light received, who make swift progress, and are seen to grow up in beauty before the Lord. On the other hand, those who are careless or rebellious when the Lord has spoken, and tardy in response— practical response—are marked by repeated defeats, recurrent bouts of spiritual cloudiness, and inability to meet an emergency demand when it arises. Too often this lack of obedience, or positive disobedience, is due to its origin in Satan - *Pride*.

25 OCT - The Unrecognized Thing: Adjustableness

One of the most common causes of spiritual stultification is fixedness. It is peculiarly common in the realm where Christian truth has been reduced to a fixed form, order, system, and creed. The doctrines of Christianity are such and such; so many. The accepted and established ideas of Christian service and methods are so-and-so. Peter had his fixed position as to Jews and Gentiles, and, because of it, came perilously near missing the larger purpose of God, and presented the Lord with a real battleground in his Christianity. It has so very largely resolved itself into a finality of position, which results in a closed door to fuller revelation as to what God means by His Word. The fact is, that God only gives us enough light to get us to take the next step, but when that step has been taken, we are in the way of being shown that much more was meant by the Lord than He showed then. The first expectations of many servants of the Lord in the Bible, expectations resultant from something said by the Lord to them, were later seen to have been not all that He really meant, but there was something more, and perhaps other than they thought.

Can anyone really dispute that full light very often means a shedding of things and ideas that we thought were of God? Is it not true that, as we go on, we find that certain leadings of the Lord were tactical, intended to get us to a certain place where alone we could learn of a greater necessity? There is very much of this kind of thing in relation to both doctrine, practice, and service—its nature and ways, and while Divine principles will never change to all eternity, the clothing of those principles may vary and change with both dispensations and generations and stages of our own lives.

In all this—while Truth remains unalterable—the only way to grow is to be adjustable and not static and fixed. Do your religious traditions bind you in such a way that you are not free to move with God? If He sees this to be so, He may not give you the light necessary to enlargement. But if He sees that, although you may be in a comparatively false position, your heart is really set on His fullness at any cost, He may present you with light which will test your adjustableness severely. See the case of the disciples of John the Baptist transferring their discipleship to Christ. See the case of Peter and what happened in the home of Cornelius. See also the case of Apollos in Acts 18:24–28; as also the disciples mentioned earlier in that chapter.

26 OCT - The Crisis Point of Committal

Very often the whole mounting avalanche of Divine working in our lives—an avalanche built up as silently and slowly as the added snowflakes in the Alps—just waits to move with power and overwhelming for that final—yet all-inclusive—act of committal. We wait; we think, wrestle, contemplate, analyze, go round-and-round; we reason and argue; we recognize that there is nothing else for it, and even say so; we even come to the point when the matter is settled in our conviction and acceptance, and we think that we are over the hedge, but nothing happens, nothing eventuates. Why is it? The Lord knows more than we do about the deceitfulness of our hearts. A covenant has two sides, and in the Old Testament two sacrifices were connected with a covenant; one representing God, the other the offerer; both were killed and the two parties to the covenant were represented as passing between the two (See Abraham in Gen. 15). There has to be a slaying of something on our side! In other words, God is waiting until we have burned our boats behind us. Though we may have approached the shore of His will and way for us, there will be nothing from God's side while our boats are just left on the shore so that, if things don't go quite as we expect, we still can retreat. That boat is an evidence of doubt or reservation. It must be burned, so that—whatever the consequence—we have no alternatives.

The young believer will not grow unless he or she makes a committal in testimony, so letting others know where they stand. The law holds good in every stage of development and progress. If policy governs, or fear, of how such a step will affect our prospects, or any consideration which conflicts with what we know in our deepest hearts is the way indicated for us—for *us*—those things are boats or bridges representing a false "Safety-first" policy. As when the bleating lambs were preserved by Saul—the finger of God will point to them and say, What mean those boats? God will wait for the full and final capitulation without a reservation, and to defer is only to be involved in confusion, and either becoming a misfit, having missed God's first best, or losing out altogether.

27 OCT - Weariness in Battle

There are many Christians who make a wonderful beginning. They see the vision of God's great purpose, and certain words in the New Testament make a great appeal to them, such as: *"Called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28). That is a wonderful vision! *"...According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Ephesians 3:11) Such a thought makes a great appeal to these people and they make a heart response. They go on so far, and then many stop too soon. They lose the vision; they lose the inspiration; they lose the sense of purpose; they lose the energy to go on, and of some we have to say: 'Something has gone out of their faces. What was there with them once is not there now. They were so positive once, so occupied with the heavenly calling, but something has happened.' These people may not be altogether conscious of it, and they would not tell you that something has happened, but it is quite evident that something has happened. They have just lost something, and you do not get the response now from them that you once got. They are not so interested now as they were. The heavenly vision has gone out of their lives. That is true of many Christians, and it could be true of all of us.

Why did these people stop short of finishing the job? I think that very likely it was because they became weary in well doing. The battle was long drawn out. It was spread over years and was very exhausting. No sooner had they gained one victory than they had to start fighting again. They did not have much rest between one battle and the next one. It was a long drawn-out warfare; they got weary in battle, and in their weariness they lost the vision, they lost heart, and they lost the initiative.

I am so glad that with all the strong things that the New Testament says, it says some very kind and understanding things about this: *"Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"* (Galatians 6:9); *"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, ... your labour is not vain in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58); *"God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love"* (Hebrews 6:10). What a lot of things there are like that! And Jesus said to His disciples, who were being brought into the battle: *"Let not your heart be troubled!"* (John 14:1), while we can hear the Lord's words to Joshua: *"Be strong and of a good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed"* (Joshua 1:9). Again, the Lord Jesus said to His disciples: *"He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved"* (Matthew 24:13).

28 OCT - The Loss of Heavenly Vision

From time to time people who began their Christian life with zeal seem to come to a place of losing steam. This has happened all too often in the past. What was the effect of people stopping too soon in their spiritual tracks? It was the loss of vision. They only saw the things that were near and lost sight of God's eternal purpose. They lost sight of what Paul calls the "*prize of the on-high calling*" (Philippians 3:14). Now this sounds like a contradiction, but they lost sight of the things that are not seen! You say: 'What do you mean by that? That is nonsense! How can you see the things that are not seen?' Paul says: "*The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*" (2 Corinthians 4:18). They lost sight of the things which are eternal because they were looking too much at the things which are seen. They lost the heavenly vision for they became satisfied too soon. It was all good so far, but the *good* became the enemy of the *best*.

The first thing that happened, then, was the loss of the heavenly vision. It works both ways. If we lose the heavenly vision we settle down too soon. If we settle down too soon we lose the heavenly vision. And what do we mean by settling down too soon? We mean: losing the warring spirit. In the Book of Judges the Philistines resorted to a very subtle strategy: they took all the weapons of war away from Israel, and all that they had left was one file to sharpen their agricultural instruments, so that every farmer in Israel had to take a journey to the blacksmith to sharpen his farm instruments. All the sharp instruments had been taken away and the spirit of war was undermined. The Philistines had made it impossible for Israel to fight and you know that there is a very big Philistine about! The strategy of this great enemy of the inheritance is to take the fighting spirit out of us. Oh, what a lot of mischief the Philistines have done to Christians! What about our prayer life? Yes, we ask the Lord for a hundred and one things, but we do not battle through to victory on some situation. There is some life in terrible bondage, there is some servant of the Lord having a hard time, and there are many other calls for battle, but where are the prayer groups who take up these issues and will not give up until they are settled? The warring spirit has gone out from so much of the Church. That is a clever strategy of the devil! Lose the spirit of spiritual battle and you will stop short of finishing the work.

29 OCT - The Recovery of a Fighting Spirit

One of the reasons why Christians who have been active settled down too soon was the spirit of the world getting in amongst them. What is the spirit of the world? It is the spirit of: Have a good time! Let us have a good time! Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die! The people of Israel looked at the world around them and, if I understand it rightly, they said: 'These people do not have all the hard time that we do. Our life is a life of continual battle. They do not know so much about that, but they believe in having a good time.' I think that is how it was at this particular time. Instead of fighting the world they made friends with the world. They made the world their friends, and so they did not finish the work. Compromise is a dangerous thing to the inheritance! Trying to be on good terms with the world and having an easy time will result in our losing a large part of the inheritance.

In the history of the Israelites we find that God did not give up the battle against the enemy, and that whenever the people took up the battle and turned again on to the Lord's side to fight the enemy, they found the Lord waiting for them. So we have the story of Deborah, the story of Gideon - and dare I mention Samson? However, although Samson was a poor sort of man, if only the Lord gets a poor chance, He will take it. You may not think much of Samson, but do you think better of yourself? We are all poor creatures! We have all been discouraged, we have all been tempted to give up, we have all stopped too soon, we have all been weary in well-doing, but take the sword of the Spirit again! Take up the battle again, and you will find the Lord is ready and waiting for you.

Gideon, Deborah, Samson, and all the others - but I think there is one who is better than them all. Do you remember that beautiful little Book of Ruth? Everybody is charmed with that book! What a lovely book of spiritual recovery it is! What a picture of the Lord's patience, the Lord's readiness to take advantage of every opportunity! How does that book begin? *"And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged..."* The Book of Ruth was in the times of the Judges, which until then was the most terrible time in history of Israel, but God was ready to change the whole picture. There are the two different pictures: the Judges and Ruth, but both were in the same period. Do you see what I am trying to say?

30 OCT - Living On the Ground of Glory

So we have to look again at the One who has set for us the pattern – who indicated the principles of the incorruptible which result in glory; to look at what was true of Him, as this incorruptible One that resulted in God giving Him glory. One or two things I will indicate because they are very important. Firstly, it was His inward separation from sin. There was a great gap between Him and sin. It is said of Him that He "*knew no sin*" (2 Corinthians 5:21), that He was "*separated from sinners*" (Hebrews 7:26). That is, that in His nature He was separate from the rest of men; there was an inward separation. Now, we are not constituted as He was, as sinless, but we are told and made to understand in the New Testament that that inward separation, which was so true of Him, can be made true in us.

Paul has a way of putting it. He calls it: "*the circumcision of Christ*" (Colossians 2:11), and he says that it is a thing of the heart, an inward separating between what we are in ourselves and what we are in Christ, the putting of a gap between the two. And then the New Testament says that by the Holy Spirit's enablement, by the Holy Spirit's power, you need not live on the ground of what you are in yourself, you can live on the ground of Christ, and living on the ground of Christ you need not be the slave of yourself and your sinfulness, you are delivered. There is something that has separated inside, and if you live on the ground of what Christ is and not on the ground of what you are in yourself, you are on the ground of the incorruptible and you are on the ground of the glory.

We who are Christians know that a cleavage has been made in us, and that we are now two people. There is that side which is our new life, our new relationship, which is our Christ-connection. There is that other side which is still our old relationship with the old Adam. It is there: it is not cauterized, it is not annihilated; and we know now that it is for us to take continually the power of the Holy Spirit, in virtue of that separating cross, to keep on the Christ side, on the new side; and if we do, we know that it is glory.

The enemy, the great enemy of the glory, was ever seeking to contaminate Him, involve Him, pollute Him, corrupt Him. Do not let us think that He never had to resist anything, that He never had to say 'No' to another. That matter of how a sinless Man could be tempted is of course an old theological problem, but there is no doubt about it that He fought our battle in all reality.

31 OCT - Outward Separation from the World

The inward separation had its outward effect or outworking in separation from the world, and no one will think for a moment that I mean physical separation from the world. No, He was here right in it, in its throng and press, in its affairs, with everything pressing upon Him; never seeking to live the life of a hermit, detached from the world, but right in it and yet while rubbing shoulder to shoulder with the world, having all the contacts of this world in every form, there was a distinctiveness about Him. He was not a part of it, but apart from it, a wonderful outward separation. While being able to talk with the grossest and the most defiled and the people most involved in this world, He was yet by no means a part of their system, their order, their way of life, but outwardly separate from the world.

The most unhappy people in this world are Christians who try to have both worlds. It is my experience that if you want to find a miserable Christian, you must find what is called 'a worldly Christian', one in whom a constant civil war goes on between two kingdoms. Yes, a Christian in this world, trying to get something out of this world is a miserable creature. I used to illustrate it by the old border battles between Scotland and England. The people who lived in the border country never had a day's rest all their lives. One day it would be the overrunning from one side, the next day from the other side, and these poor people on the border line had the most miserable existence possible. It is like that. You try to live on a border-line - or border-land Christian life - and you will be a miserable person, without rest or peace or joy or anything else. You will never know exactly where you are, who is your master, which way you are going, to whom you belong. It is a miserable existence.

The Lord Jesus was not like that. He was on one side and absolutely on one side. The border line was a very wide one for Him. Indeed, there was no border line. He was attached to heaven, and He maintained that attachment. You and I, if we are going to know glory now and glory afterward, will have to be on the same ground as He was in this matter - no compromise with the world; in it, having to do our work here, having to meet people here, having to be friendly in a way, yet not one with their nature, their realm, their way. It is a difficult thing - not as easy to do as to say - it works out in many practical ways. The point is that Christ was wholly for God, and because of that, His Father was the Father of glory, and the Spirit of glory rested upon Him, and the Father could give Him glory.

NOVEMBER

1 NOV - Keeping On Going in the Glory Line

I believe that the secret of the apostle Paul's life, from the very first day of his conversion, right up to the end when, after so many years, and after seeing and knowing so much, was to be still found aspiring, still stretched out. He had seen Jesus of Nazareth glorified, and he said: 'That is the on-high calling!' This is so much in keeping with what we have read in the letter to the Hebrews. We read: *"We behold... Jesus... crowned with glory and honour"* and then we read on: *"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling..."* (Hebrews 3:1). What is this heavenly calling? It is Jesus crowned with glory, as the Man according to God's eternal intention for man. Christ in a glorified humanity is the model, the pattern, the representation of God's intention for all who believe in the Lord Jesus.

So then, if we have received that eternal life, if Christ is in us, dwelling in our hearts through faith, this is our destiny. We have the basis of an incorruptible life, which will eventually emerge in the fullness of that glory which He, as our Representative, now knows. Faith not only believes for the forgiveness of sins, not only for pardon, not only for justification and redemption. Faith in Jesus Christ apprehends Him as the very humanity to which we are to be conformed. Faith takes hold of Him as He is now, and says: 'He is as He is because God wants me to be like that'; and, if we did but know, the Spirit of glory is operating for us on that basis every day, to make us like Him, to transform us that we may be transfigured, to conform us to His image. All the meaning of the activities and methods of the Spirit of God in our lives is to lay a foundation for glory.

May the Lord teach us how to keep clear of this corrupted world, how to keep clear of that wretched, corrupt old man. You remember that magnificent, though so simple, picture that Bunyan has given us of the man with the muck rake who has a crown of glory over his head, who is so occupied with his rake and so obsessed with what is down in the mud, that he does not see the glory but misses it all. That muck is our old man, and we are always turning him over to see if we can find something good in him, some glory. We are seemingly incapable of learning this one lesson, that there is no glory in that realm. We should finish all these investigations and lift up our eyes to the Lord of glory. This is how we will find the way of glory. Let us keep on the glory line.

2 NOV - The Central Issue of Human Pride

What is the one evil thing that is the root of all trouble? It is *pride*. What is the good thing? Well, just the opposite - *humility*. There is no doubt about it wherever you look, from the day that man sinned to this day and to the end which the Bible gives us, you find it is just that issue which lies behind the whole history of God and man and the evil forces - just that issue. There are many aspects of it, but it comes to one question. In one way or another it can be traced to this question of pride or humility.

Yes, the whole Bible is built upon it. The whole meaning of Christ's coming into this world is bound up with it, His very coming from glory. Somewhere, somehow, before He arrived, He *"emptied himself"* (Phil. 2:7). He spoke to the Father later of the glory He had with Him before the world was (John 17:5). He had laid aside all that, He had emptied Himself. And then His strange, ah, yes, very strange - until we have this key - His strange entry into this world, the circumstances of it all related to His coming and His whole time here. *"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests [lit. roosts]; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"* (Matt. 8:20). It is all this one issue. The whole meaning of His coming - His condescension, self-emptying, birth, life, death and the whole explanation of the experiences of His people - is all centred in this one matter. The discipline, the chastening, as it is termed, the Lord's dealings with us are centred in one thing: it is all related to the purpose for which Christ came, and how He came and how He accomplished the purpose.

And, further, the whole nature and vocation of the Church is centred in this one thing. The Church that is going to serve the eternal counsels of God will never be a Church of pride, self-glory, worldly glory, worldly power, worldly praise. It will be, ever and always, what it was at the beginning, something that the world will not look upon with praise, will always look upon with contempt. That is essential to its vocation, for its vocation is positively to displace the world, and its temper and spirit and standards; to do something spiritually in this universe to rid it of that evil thing which has been its plague and curse from Adam onward.

3 NOV - "To This Man Will I Look"

On the one side, it is terribly true: *"Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord"* (Prov. 16:5). *"The haughty he knoweth from afar"* (Ps. 138:6). It all sprang out of that proud heart that lifted itself up and said, *"I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; ...I will be like the Most High"* (Isa. 14:13, 14). With that "I", all the trouble began, and that one bit his poison into the race. The poison of the human race is **pride**, and it has come all the way down. It is sometimes almost untraceable: we are not able always to trace it out in all its forms, because pride has what we might call negative aspects as well as positive. There are, of course, the obviously, manifestly proud, the ambitious, the assertive, the self-important, the self-sufficient. But there are negative aspects and I use that word with regard to pride very carefully, because pride is positive whatever form it takes. It is an ugly thing. A lot of our murmuring is pride; a lot of tears are pride; we think they are humility. A lot of our criticism of other people springs from pride: we think we could do better, we could go one better, setting ourselves up as the judge, the critic; pride is at the root. Very much of our poor, miserable tone is, after all, pride. Oh, how subtle and serpentine a thing this is! It is there. So the Lord has to stand back.

On the other hand, look at humility. *"To this man will I look"* - that is the beginning, the Lord even looking in anyone's direction *"even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit"* (Isa. 66:2), and He dwells with them (Isa. 57:15). And *"the meek will he guide in judgement: and the meek will he teach his way"* (Ps. 25:9). And *"the meek shall inherit the earth"* (Matt. 5:5). It is like that all the way through; vindication is on that basis. *"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth"* (Num. 12:3): and you know when that was said at the time when his position was disputed, and God appeared at the entrance of the tabernacle and answered the challenge on the ground of the meekness of His servant. God stands by and vindicates the meek.

Is not the Lord justified in taking any steps to clear up that situation breaking, emptying, humbling, withholding, deferring, delaying; in any way bringing us to nought, to a place of utter dependence, where there is nothing we can rely upon at all but the Lord Himself? Is He justified? It is a tremendous process. It is a very real, very devastating work.

4 NOV - God's Single Purpose

God has a fixed, determined purpose. He has His thoughts from eternity clearly and perfectly defined. The world is not in a jumble; things are not, from God's standpoint, in chaos. They may be from man's point of view, but from God's they are not. One clear, sure thought and purpose is actively at work in all these things which are going on as they affect and touch the life of the people of God, and we must remember that, at the heart of the universe, are the elect; the very core of everything is the people of God, the *"called according to his purpose."* That is why they are never exempt from the things which go on in the world; God never puts them into positions isolated from world happenings, never sets them aside in some place where they are untouched and unaffected. The Lord's people are the heart of things and God's fullest thought is centred in them; and around that people, embodying that thought of God, the whole creation is gathered, according to this Scripture, and is said to be groaning in travail in direct relation to this thought of God which is to emerge ultimately in the manifestation of the sons of God.

God's thoughts are very high but they are not beyond any who have the Holy Spirit. Right from the beginning, before the world was created, God had a definite thought. It was not an idea that He was going to try out, not something that had come into His mind and He was going to experiment with it to see if He could bring it to pass. When God thinks a thought it is as good as an act. *"I know the thoughts that I think toward you... to give you an expected end"* (Jer. 29:11); and who will for a moment allow room for God's thoughts to be ultimately defeated? No, God's thoughts are God's acts. So that He had a thought which was as good as an accomplishment from the beginning, and right through the ages He has been at work with that thought in relation to His own people; and in such times as this in which we are living, times of great trial for the people of God, that thought of God takes on a new meaning and His people ought to turn back to it in order that they may be saved.

What is it, then, that will secure us there? What will deliver us? It will be the basic and all-governing thought of God. If only you can be assured that God is definitely giving Himself to something, and can see what that something is, and can have, by the Holy Spirit, the witness in your own being that He is doing that in your case, you are delivered. Otherwise you are in chaos and you will soon be in despair. That is where the world is. It is indeed *"having no hope and without God in the world."*

5 NOV - Conformed To the Image of the Son

"Whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son."

Rom 8:29

"Conformed to the image of his Son" — that is the basic, all-governing thought of God where His people are concerned. That is what He has been at work upon from the beginning with His people. That is at the very heart and root of our present experiences, our trials, our suffering. God is at work upon you and me with this one thing in view — conformity to the image of His Son. That means many things, which we do not now stay to consider, but we take fresh note of it as the underlying, undergirding fact. Going right back before time, *"foreknown, foreordained,"* on to *"the ages of the ages,"* the realization; *"conformed to the image of his Son."* The previous verse (v. 28) expresses this — *"God is working all things for good with those who are called according to His purpose."*

What good? What is the good of the suffering and trial that we go through? It is this — that God is (may I use the word?) reproducing His Son in us; and His Son is His hope, and His ultimate glory is to be revealed manifestly in the saints in terms of sonship. It is the hope for the whole creation — *"subjected to vanity... in hope."* We are travailing in hope. The hope is in God's Son, and the hope is the manifestation of that Son in the saints. *"Christ in you the hope of glory."*

So we must go back to the sphere and conditions in which the Lord has placed us, with this attitude — God has a thought which relates to me as one of His Own; and that thought is, that through the conditions and sufferings of my life He should develop in me the features of His Son. On the one hand, the features of the old creation may be seen to be more and more terrible and horrible, as I recognize them in myself; but over against that God is doing something which is other than myself, not me at all. He is bringing into being Another, altogether other, and that is His Son. Slowly, all too slowly; nevertheless something is happening. That sonship is not very much manifested yet, but it is going to be manifested. What God has been doing will come out into the light eventually — conformity to the image of His Son; *"that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."*

6 NOV - Perfected Through Suffering

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Rom. 8:18

What is God doing with His people? He is using all these things which are happening, primarily to bring about in His people that conformity to the image of His Son which is to mean Christ in manifestation in an elect people — a people foreordained — foreknown for this very thing. This thought of God is a delivering thought. How do you pray for the Lord's people in times of trouble? Of course, we are all tempted to pray for their deliverance, to cry to the Lord that they may escape. It may be right at times to pray thus, but suppose the Lord does not deliver? He does not always deliver at once. He allows the situation to continue, to become long drawn out.

The enemy will encamp upon that fact and give it his own twist and interpretation — 'God is not doing anything; He has left His people, is standing back, is not concerned.' There is no answering voice, no slightest indication that He is taking any account at all. It is like that very often, and that is a real playground for the enemy. God apparently makes no response. How shall we be delivered from going to pieces, from being overwhelmed in such a time and under such conditions? Only by grasping this thought of God; and then we have to begin to pray along other lines.

If God does not act to deliver His people, there is a deeper and a higher thought and purpose than their deliverance, and He is at work upon that; and deeply in them He is going to reproduce the patience, the endurance, the longsuffering of Jesus Christ. If you go right over the whole ground of God's Son perfected through sufferings and can read your Gospels anew and understand Him as He differs so utterly from the standards of men, you can see what God is doing with us His people. Meekness and gentleness — these are foreign things to our natures; under stress, under adversity, under the cruel hand of tyrannical men — to say, *'Father, forgive!'* He could say *"I am meek and lowly in heart."* Oh, you see — the image of His Son. Such testing conditions are a terrible challenge to our natural dispositions. Our whole nature revolts against meekness and lowliness and wants to rise up and be even with the other one, or be the master. Our nature does not accept and delight in opposition, antagonism, frustration, persecution, and all such things.

7 NOV - The Reward of Suffering

The very heart of suffering, the very heart of co-heirship with Christ, is this wonderful sense of inward relationship to the object in view, inward relationship to the inheritance, inward relationship to the result, the reward. And that is the explanation of suffering, of labour, of conflict. The Lord does not just give to us without cost. He always brings us into the cost of that which He is going to give. It will be grace all the way through, but He brings us into the cost of the reward. In the end, let us repeat, we shall acknowledge that any part we have had in it of suffering, labour, warfare, has been infinitely outweighed by what He has given and that is where grace will always be our theme; but I do believe that mingled with our gratitude will be this sense that the Lord enabled us to achieve, that He did not act without us and apart from us. He brought us into it, and there will be this deep, inward, heart-relatedness to the result, that we share with Him the gratification. That is the very heart of suffering, I believe.

I have just returned from a time in the United States, and it has not by any means been an easy time very much otherwise. But we have been profoundly grateful all the time that you dear friends were so many hours ahead of us. In the Eastern part of the States you were five hours ahead. When we got further west you were six hours ahead, and we constantly reminded ourselves that your prayer gatherings were ahead of us. They had gone before and we were just following on, in our own prayer and in the conflict and the pressure; following on, and, as we believe, being carried through. And there came to me this: Those dear friends are right in the battle, and if there is anything here that really is for the Lord, if anything results for the Lord, it belongs to them, quite as much as it belongs to us. It is theirs; in a certain sense they will own this; it will be, so to speak, their property. They have battled for it, suffered for it, endured for it, toiled for it. They have gone on ploughing the way, pioneering the way, and it is theirs.

That is the thought right at the heart of this word, that there is something that becomes ours through suffering. Yes, it is the Lord's, and it is all of His grace, but it is ours.

8 NOV - *Suffering Is a Purifying Thing*

Suffering for anything is a very purifying thing. Take the matter of the child for which there has been suffering, travail. Well, other people who have not so suffered and travailed and gone through for the child can see all the defects and pass all the criticisms and arrive at their judgments, good or bad, about that child, and just stand apart and say their say about the child. But the mother may see very little of that. There is something for the mother which transcends all that. 'Oh yes, you may say that, but that child is very precious to me. I have suffered for that child, that child is my child, the child of my heart and the child of my travail, and, while I may see its faults, there is something which covers them all, there is the jealousy of a love born of suffering'.

Now you see what I am getting at. There is nothing that is precious to the Lord, and which He would make the property of His people, but there will be suffering for it. It will only become their property in that sense as they suffer for it, and then woe betide who criticizes that! If you are detached from a thing, if you are detached from a testimony, from a work of God, you can do all the criticizing you like. You have no inward heart-relationship to it, and so you pass your judgments upon it. But if you are in it and you have suffered, if it has been a costly thing where you are concerned, then you are seeing more than all the failings, more than all those faults. The people who can criticize like that and judge and point out faults are the people who have not suffered.

On the other side, we may know all the terms, all the phraseology, all the doctrine, all the truth, and it may be just objective, something we have heard; we have lived in the midst of it, it is familiar to us. But what the Lord will do if that is to become ours is to take us into travail over the matter. He will relate that thing to our hearts in a deep, inward way, so that none of us will be able to say, 'I know all about that, I have heard all about that, I could tell you all that you could tell me about that'. The Lord would so work in a costly, deep and painful way in relation to that, to make it ours through travail, that we are brought into a new position. We are not spectators, looking on, criticizing; we are on the inside, looking out, defending. We are jealous over it. Suffering is a great purifying thing. It destroys selfishness. It destroys that self-interest that is the cause of so much of the trouble. It makes us in a disinterested way jealous for what is of God. Yes, suffering purifies, and suffering makes this deep, inward link.

9 NOV - Joint Heirs with Christ through Suffering

"Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him." Rom. 8:17

This is not just an official thing, something that is a gratuitous gift in a mechanical way, as much as to say, 'Well, you have done a bit of work; here are your wages'. That thing has been wrought in us through the suffering and the cost and the warfare and the labour, and there is this sense of an inward co-heirship with Christ, if we suffer. It will be a very blessed thing, to us who know how much we are dependent upon the grace of God, how little we can even bear without the support of His grace; it will be a wonderful thing when at last He says, 'This is the reward of your suffering'. We shall say, 'Well, after all, it was our light affliction in the light of the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. How have we earned this?' But there will be some gratification in recognizing that the Lord has taken account of what we have gone through, and has brought us into a sense of His own gratification, and given us to feel 'Well, it was not in vain, it was not for nought'.

Many of us have gone through the years in toil, in suffering, in labour and warfare in the Lord's interests, and if there is anything that comes out of that at all, it is ours, in this sense that we are jealous over it with a right kind of jealousy. It belongs to us in the Lord. Yes, it is the Lord's, but it belongs to us in the Lord, the fruit of suffering and of travail and of cost. Your faithfulness in prayer, and in prayer-gatherings - it is not without cost that you continue like that. Your faithfulness in the upholding of those who go out - it costs - it is not without price if there is anything. The Lord has given it to you as your inheritance; that is yours. All that eternal spiritual value is yours in Christ. Now look after it, cherish it, watch jealously over it, and from all attacks defend it. If only we had this inward sense of relatedness to everything that costs, what a difference it would make, how less ready we should be to see the defects and the faults!

The Lord bring us to understand that the meaning of the conflict and of the suffering, from His standpoint, is not only - and I say this quite reverently - not only in order to get something for Him. It is because He wants us in an inward relatedness to it, as a very part of ourselves. I believe that is the very essence of this joint-heirship with Jesus Christ.

10 NOV - Manifesting God's Glory through Suffering

"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." John 11:4

Now, friends, this is something to which you and I have to seek quite diligently to adjust ourselves. Let us widen and enlarge the application from just human indisposition or sickness, even if it does culminate in death. Let us view in the light of this perhaps a lifetime of difficulty and adversity and suffering, perhaps something that has come to us for which we have more than thrice sought the Lord that it might be removed, and the Lord has in effect said, 'No': there has been no removal; it is something that we are called upon to experience and endure. It may be something in our lives as a whole, or it may be some event in our lives of great distress. Oh, look at it, whatever it may be in your case that you would have removed, to which you would take the attitude that Mary and Martha took. This is a tragedy, this is a misfortune, this is a great adversity, this is an overwhelming sorrow, this is all against us, all contrary to our good and to our blessing and to our joy. The Word of God makes it clear in more than one place that there is a sovereignty behind the lives of His own, *"the called according to His purpose"*, which may have not just let that thing happen, but actually ordained it, and made that very thing, ordered by the will of God, the means by which something should come from our lives very much to the glory of God.

I know that it is not easy to take that attitude toward things when you are in them - it is the most difficult thing; but here is something which is concrete as a statement, and it says in a general way to us, *"to them that love God... that are called according to his purpose"* (Rom. 8:28): 'You who love the Lord, there is some tremendous possibility for the Lord's glory, the Lord's satisfaction, wrapped up in that which you are inclined to regard as a trouble, suffering, adversity, a setback, a tragedy, if not a catastrophe, a strange and mysterious providence which has reversed your hopes and expectations all that and much more.' That may be something that the Lord has not only allowed to take place, but has arranged Himself. In the end, of course, we recognize that and acknowledge it, and we shall not be sorry that we went through that thing. In the lives of those who love the Lord there is in suffering something for God's glory, and if our hearts are set upon His glory, we shall share it. *"If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him."* (Rom. 8:17)

11 NOV - The Centrality of the Law of Travail

"We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also..." Rom 8:22

There is a law of travail that is written deep in creation and perhaps mostly in human history. It is one fact which no one can deny. It is there. We cannot get away from it. It is forcing itself upon our consciousness and recognition all through our lives.

The Bible begins with the establishment of this law, both in human life and in the natural order. The Bible ends with the abolition of that law; its complete removal from every realm of creation. It can be traced through the whole Bible. In almost every book of the Bible, this law of travail can be found. And in the last book, the book of the Revelation which is the culmination of all the things that are in the rest of the Bible, we find that the outstanding feature of that book is this law of travail. In every connection and direction, it's a book of travail. The Church is in travail. The overcomers are in travail. The nations are in travail. All the heavenly bodies are in travail. It is the culmination of this law which has been operating all the way through history. It began with the birth of the first child; it ends with the birth of a new heaven and a new earth.

It is therefore a very important thing that we should understand the meaning attached to this law, why God introduced it and established it and has never lifted it and never does; but holds all history of individuals, of families, of society, of nations, and peculiarly of the Church, to this law. I say it's very important that we should understand the divine meaning attaching to travail. What did God mean man to learn by it?

We are not so concerned with man in general, or even with the world, although it would be instructive were we to see what God is doing in nations and in society and in industry and in science and in every other realm by this law, for it's there; but that is not our present object. If the Church is what we are given to understand that it is, the central object of God's concern, of God's interest, the center of His concentrated activities, then the Church has something to learn from this law because there is no doubt about it that however true it is in every other realm, the Church has at the very center of its history the working out of this law of travail. There is a concentration, it would seem, of this law in the Church.

12 NOV - The Necessity and Inevitability of Travail

"A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world." John 16:21

We all know that if we don't suffer for a thing, we don't value it. If it costs you nothing then it means little to you. If you have really suffered agonies and anguish for anything, for anyone, over any matter, that thing is of infinite preciousness to you. You're going to fight for that, you're going to watch over that with keen jealousy. That is something very precious. And is not that just how the law of travail works? Yes! It's like that. If it comes without travail, without any cost, well it's taken too lightly isn't it? Far too lightly. It doesn't mean all that *that* means which has cost you almost your very life.

The Lord introduced this factor that in every birth it's a question of life or death. Life and death are in the balances every time. The governing question: how is it going? You're held in tension... and when it's alright - how the heart goes out: thank God! Thank God... Worship. God comes into His place. God comes into His place, very often with those who have never given Him any place before, at any rate there is a spontaneous: "Thank God!" You see the principle, you see how true it is. And so God established this, ah yes, this painful way, this *suffering way*, as the only way in which He could recover and establish the law of values, of preciousness, and save man from his superficiality with regard to the most costly things.

He did it in order to secure a heart relationship with Himself and with everything that comes from Him. A *heart relatedness*, that is love! Love! A love that is far removed from despising the Lord or anything of the Lord. A love that involves the very life itself; that if its object is lost then life itself goes with it. See? It's like that.

Every divine deposit is on that basis, dear friends. Sooner or later, every divine deposit will take on this value. Anything that comes from God will sooner or later pass into the realm of suffering, into the realm of travail, to find out how much value we put upon it, how much it really means to us, how much we have seen of God in it. It will become a matter of life or death. Under this law all divine things have been put upon this basis.

13 NOV - Joy Out of Travail

There is written in the very law of travail the law of hope, the law of a new prospect. And all I'm going to say about that this morning is this: we, individually or as a people, may go through times of deep suffering, trial, and everything seems to be in the balances. How is it going, how's it going... is it life or death? We're in the grip of this crisis. Oh, let us believe with all our hearts that although we come this way again and again in our history, under the hand of God it's unto something new! It's unto something better! It's unto a new hope with a new expectation! Don't you believe that the end is shame, is remorse, is disappointment. God never established the law of travail that that should be the end, but that there should be a birth of something infinitely precious. And it happens again and again doesn't it?

Every new emergence of something of the Lord is more precious than what was before, but it's costly. *It's costly*. If I may say so, dear friends, it may be that we here have been going through travail, we're in the time of suffering and perhaps we're inclined to feel that it's an end, there's going to be loss. No! That's not the Lord's way. The Lord has so worked that, isn't it strange, we come into experiences in life where it's the most terrible experience you've ever had and now, and now of course, this is the end. This is going to put the finish to everything. And it is the most terrible suffering! And when it's past, the strange thing about human nature about some things is that we forget; we forget the anguish, that is, it passes. But what it has brought is the thing that governs and dominates everything isn't it? The values that have come. Supposing we were always living in all the anguishes that we have ever had, life would be unbearable. But that passes, but we *are* living in the values.

Well I think that's all I've got to say, do remember that cheapness in relation to the things of God will only end in disaster. Unbelief will end in despair. The faith in God in a dark and difficult day will produce something new and something better. If we are too easy-going about our spiritual values, nothing substantial will be affected.

14 NOV - The Marks of His Ownership

I remember one day many years ago, when I was only a lad, a deep impression that was made upon me. I was in a shop; it was commercial travelers' day in that shop and two commercial travelers came in. One came in, looked all round to see who was in the shop, saw some people there, so stepped over into the corner and waited. Then he proceeded to his business in a sort of way that suggested to my youthful mind that he was ashamed to be doing business; that he did not want people to know what he was. It was all so under cover. Perhaps I should not have noticed it so much had it not been for the next episode. The door opened, and in came a fine, big fellow, a strapping young man. He saw the manager "Good-morning, Mr. So-and-so. I have a splendid line for you today", and started right away. Everybody in the shop heard all about it. He went straight at it and captured the business, he got it forthwith. He was bent on business. It made a tremendous impression on me. As we came out of the shop, someone who was with me said, "That is the way to do business". Forgive me if that seems to be coming on to a very low level. I do feel that there is a great deal in being open and letting it be known where you stand. No hiding the brand.

We belong to the Lord; we are glad that we belong to the Lord; we are very glad to call Him "Master"; we have no compromise over that. We belong to the Lord and we tell Him that, and we will tell every other Christian that, but is it only in the realm where we are accepted, where we know we are accepted, where we know it is quite safe and quite comfortable to let it be known? What about this world? The marks of His ownership. Remember Paul and that shipwreck. How outstanding he was! He warned them, and then the time came when they were at their wit's end, and he came up to the Master of the ship and he said, *"Be of good cheer. The Lord, Whose I am, and Whom I serve..."* That's it - no covering there. He let it be known. I do not think I need try to drive that home. That lies here, right at the beginning the marks of faithfulness and loyalty in our allegiance to Him, Whom we are glad to call Master and Lord; to Whom we really do owe everything. Is it not just a little unfair, to say the least of it, when we are prepared in secret with Him to acknowledge that we owe Him everything, to be ashamed to let it be known out in the world Whose we are?

15 NOV - The Marks of Our Devotion and Service

We are not going to get very far in our devotion to the interests of the Lord Jesus in this world without discovering that it is going to mean sacrifice; *suffering unto sacrifice*. It is going to cost. It may cost something in the matter of position, recognition; the best things may not be allowed to come our way. We may not be given an open door into certain circles; those circles may be closed to us. There may be many whose friendship we would like to have, but which friendship will be withheld from us. In many ways we may have to suffer loss, suffer unto sacrifice if the interests of the Lord Jesus are going to be pursued and furthered through us. I doubt whether it is possible for the real interests of the Lord Jesus to be served without sacrifice on our part. I do not think it is possible, and it may be that you and I at the close of our course here will look back and see many things that might have been ours, positions, and acceptances, and rewards, but which we have never come into, never possessed. We have to let them go for Jesus' sake, and we may at that time bear the brand of the Lord Jesus in this connection. Why? Why this? Why that? Why has it meant this? Why has it cost that? Why have I never got where some have got? That is the brand of the Lord Jesus, the mark of Jesus.

There are gains hidden from view which will more than compensate for that. This man, who wrote these words, wrote in another place, *"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 which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal: but the things which are not seen are eternal"*. But the things seen do hold us so much, don't they? It is so difficult to get our eyes away from things seen; that is, the things that are manifest, things that can be taken account of, they are so present to view. The losses, the sufferings, the trials, the difficulties, the adversities, these are things seen. Things not seen — what are they, after all? Well, so far as we are concerned, the things that are not seen are promises. That is what it amounts to. They are real in God, but to us they are nothing more than promises. We have not got them, they are not seen. For present practical purposes they are only promises, yet far more exceeding and eternal, far more excellent, a weight of glory exceeding and eternal, a weight of glory. That is there unseen, while we bear the marks of loss here, loss of what we might have had, could have had. It was there for us, but, because of the interests of the Lord Jesus, it had to be let go. The marks of the Lord Jesus - faithfulness unto sacrifice, the unpopular way with all that it costs.

16 NOV - The Marks of Our Likeness to Jesus

For you and for me there has got to be Christlikeness as the mark of His ownership of our lives. How does Christlikeness come about? Well, the marks of devotion in service come about by the measure in which we are prepared to suffer for Him, make sacrifices for Him. The marks of Christlikeness come about by the measure in which we have communion with Him, so that the marks of Christlikeness are the result of faithfulness in communion.

You see, the marks of ownership are the results of faithfulness in loyalty; the marks of devotion in service are the marks of faithfulness in suffering and sacrifice; the marks of Christlikeness come out of faithfulness in communion with the Lord. How shall I be like Christ? How will you be like Christ? How will others see the marks of Jesus in us? Just in so far as we are faithful in our communion. You know that in everyday life. Start the day without your quiet time, without your prayer, and it will not be long before there are other marks in your life than the marks of Jesus. Neglect prayer, neglect communion with your Lord, and the traces of the Lord will soon disappear from view. On the other hand, look after the matter of communion, preserve that quiet time, those quiet times, look after your times of prayer, see to it that He has a place in your heart, a large place in your heart every day and you need not worry about being like the Lord Jesus. All the worry to be like the Lord Jesus will not make any difference. People who walk closely with Him, keep in touch with Him, look after the prayer life, do carry those marks of His restfulness, His peacefulness, His patience, His gentleness, His kindness, His love; the marks of Jesus. That is how it comes about.

I do not tell you to strive and I do not tell you to strive and struggle to be like Jesus. I say, keep in touch with Jesus. Do believe me, for I have gone this way. I know, oh! I know, on the one hand the blessedness, and on the other hand the bitterness of suffering bound up with this very thing. The blessedness of looking after the quiet times, the prayer times, the communion life with the Lord! Oh yes! In business, in the world, what a difference it makes! On the other hand, things breaking in, adverse things that interfere with the life of communion with the Lord, and the result—! Oh, the miserable, wretched result! May I urge upon you to see to faithfulness in communion with your Lord, and, perhaps without knowing it (and it will be better so), you will be bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus, His likeness. I do not want you to be able to go about showing people how like Christ you are. We want it to be there and yet not to know it. It will be there if you look after the life of communion. So be faithful in this. And then? Well, what matters? *"Henceforth let no man trouble me, I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus"*. May it be like that with all of us! "His forever, only His, Who the Lord and me shall part?"

17 NOV - Meeting the Lord in the Word

The all-governing thing with God is His self-manifestation, and that can only be along the lines and by means of spiritual life. There is no other way of manifesting God, God becoming really known; only along spiritual lines. There is not one of us who knows the Lord Jesus and has that knowledge in any other way. We do not have a physical knowledge of Jesus. We have come into our knowledge of Him in a spiritual way, and every fuller bit of knowledge of Him is spiritual, essentially spiritual, and God cannot be known in any other way. The Lord cannot be manifested in any other way. There is that mystic, strange, inexplicable *something* which is extra, which is the Lord. I mean, it is not teaching. There may be a great mass of teaching, and perfectly right and true teaching, a great fullness of truth, and yet there may just be lacking that something, that extra something, that mystic something that leaves it as truth, a bulk of truth, and does not get you anywhere. When you have got it all, it has not got you anywhere. It is not something objective at all, objective in the way of truth imparted, teaching given, doctrine held.

It is not a matter of work done for the Lord, in the Name of the Lord, things that we are doing — even the matter of leading others to accept Him, as an engagement, as a form of activity, of work. It is not the constituting or the constructing of something for the Lord in the same way as we would go to work to build up some other institution in the world and call it by this or that name; it is not that. These may be means, but if there is not that extra, as I call it, that mystical something, if it is just an objective thing, it has failed in its divine value. That something, that extra, is the Lord. The Lord has been imparted, and all teaching and truth which does not impart the Lord — not just knowledge, truth and doctrine, material, however right in its place — if it does not carry with it the Lord and impart the Lord and result in people who are alive, who are sensitive, who are open, who are prepared, being able to say, Yes, the Word was good, but the Lord met me in the Word — if it is not that extra, it has failed. If any of the work that is being done, all the activities, all the business, with the best of motives and a great zeal and devotion, whole-heartedness, if the upshot of it is *not* that the Lord has come in, it is the Lord, something extra to the Word, you have come into touch with the Lord; it has failed.

18 NOV - Chosen for Intrinsic Value

You know in Romans 8, perhaps the most familiar chapter in the Bible to you, it is always the contrast there between the Spirit and the flesh. You know that in that chapter you have got past the grave, you are now on resurrection ground, and it is all now the spiritual. First, the law of life has made you free, then it is all the Spirit, the spiritual mind, the spiritual man, everything spiritual, and God has not departed from that. Man, thinking in more material and objective terms, has not taken God away from His basis. His basis is still that, right from the cross; it is spiritual nature, spiritual measure. It is all what is really spiritual in the divine sense. It is the Lord.

And that explains so largely the Lord's dealings with us. Do believe it! The Lord is after having mother tincture in spiritual life - that is, the 'flavour', trace or tinge of the Lord Himself. That is essentially spiritual intrinsic value.

Here, speaking among ourselves, I do not see, as I have thought and thought, and spent very much time in weighing up everything, I do not see any other explanation for the way in which we are dealt with by the Lord. I see no other explanation for our existence. I have never accepted that, if the Lord wanted to do what He is doing generally in this world, why He should have made something more here, something separate here? We were at one time doing that and getting on splendidly in the general realm of earnest Christian evangelical activity. That could have gone on. But the Lord did something and brought us apart as a people, not — let me say it strongly — not to make us in ourselves any more important. We have not got one inch of ground to stand upon to speak of superior importance or our superior value. But I do believe that He did something because He wanted His people, perhaps in all the world, or many of His people all over this world, to come into something more of Himself by putting this corporate vessel into the furnace. You know immediately you come into touch with this, you get into trouble. The only thing that will keep you going on, that will maintain your relationship, is that you find more of the Lord. If you do not — go, friend, go! Do not be attached to a thing. It is *the Lord*. And if it is not, my prayer is ever: Wind it up, put it out, if it does not stand justified in its extra measure of the Lord.

19 NOV - The Fire of the Chosen Ones

But you are really going into the furnace if you are going to be of intrinsic spiritual value, if it is going to be the Lord. Oh, do not go out with *teaching*. 'This is our teaching, what we stand for.' No, none of that! Go out and live and be the Lord, in effect, in manifestation. That is the only justification.

What the Lord is after is men and women individually and collectively who do not hold some higher truth, propound some fuller or deeper doctrines or have a more exact New Testament technique, but who are the impact and registration of Himself in a spiritual way, that it can be said, "In touching them, I have met the Lord". That is the way of a fiery furnace.

God does not want instruments. An instrument, a tool, is something you take up and has to respond mechanically to you. God wants living beings impregnated with Himself; to touch them is to touch the Lord Himself. Well, that explains the way of the Lord with us in our own experience, what He is after. It is a fresh challenge to us. May it have this effect, that it saves us from looking at others, what they are doing and what is being done, and coveting and envying; saying, Well, you see... and then gravitating in heart in that direction.

Remember that it may be — I am not going to say dogmatically that it is — but it may be an election. "I have chosen..." Maybe He has put His hand on you for something more. You could serve Him; you could be of use in other realms. It may be He has put His hand on you for something more, and because of that you go through it as other people do not.

Fire for you means something far more than for many others. Think that it may be an election to serve the Lord in some deeper way than the average, than the general, and the fire will see to the matter of conceit and pride. There will be no room left for them.

20 NOV - The Things which Befall Us

You and I, in the time of difficulty and adversity, deep suffering and trial, are so often tempted to think that something very wrong has taken place, and there is a big question as to whether it ought to be, seeing we belong to the Lord. We are really, in heart, devoted to the Lord; we mean business with Him and now look at this! Well, it befell and it befalls. We must get to the point of a conclusion about this, that there is no charm resting upon the life of the most devoted child of God, there is no special providence to say that no adversity shall overtake, shall befall. It just does happen, it is a fact, and that is where we begin.

It happened to Paul, it befell him (2 Cor. 1:8-10), but he does not raise any questions at all about God or about spiritual issues in such a way as to lead him into difficulties with the Lord. Are you one whose way has been, and perhaps still is, one of great adversity, trial, suffering, perplexity? It has happened to you, it has overtaken, it has befallen you. Well, Paul is not alone in this, that it is a part of the course of things. It has a meaning; but my point at the moment is that these things are facts. You cannot get away from them. You must settle down to it that they are facts to be recognized and accepted as making up the lot of a true servant and child of God. That is where we begin.

But then there is another thing here. Of course, we do not know what was the exact nature of Paul's particular trial. It is probable that it was some terrible illness which overtook him, some sickness which brought him to an end of all hope. Whatever it was, he says: *"We despaired even of life; yea, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves."* This is the end, death! But what we want particularly to note is the exercise that the affliction produced in Paul. Evidently he had been looking into this thing, scrutinizing it and saying, What is the Divine meaning in my situation? What does the Lord mean by this? Although it looks like a hap, it has befallen me, yet the Lord has something bound up with it. There was enquiry and exercise about the situation, and in his prayerful investigation, he comes to realize what the Lord's mind is, and he sums it all up in the little word *THAT*. *"We have had the sentence of death within ourselves, THAT we should not trust in ourselves, but in God..."* All this happened in order that... There was a Divine object, a Divine meaning, something quite precise. ...in order that *"we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead."*

21 NOV - God Always Has the Last Word

Are you expecting ends, limitation, feeling that for you there is no hope, no future? Do not believe it! Get down to this and see it as the great eternal fact. God is trying to bring us to the place where we stop expecting what the Devil is constantly offering through circumstances - death, an end, limitation. God is all the time thinking of increase, enlargement. That is the history of the Church. Again and again, generally and in individual cases, it has been said, This is the end; it is all over; the Lord has done with us; and yet oh, how slow we are to learn it, to get it fixed, established! – It does not prove to be the end, does it? We find that there is still a lease of life, still something more in the Lord's intention; and even when the point is really reached of an end here on earth, we do not believe that is the end of life and work – it is *emancipation unto fullness*.

These are very simple things, but all hang upon this little word "*that*." God allows very deep and hard and painful things - things which bring us in ourselves really to the point of giving up, where we pass the verdict of death upon ourselves. He allows them with this object, that however much we may have known and proved the truth in our earlier experience, He may bring us yet a stage further into the power and good of it, that God raiseth the dead. If He does that, then there is hope for anybody and for anything. The Lord give us more of this disciplined, instructed, enlightened faith. We cannot come to it by being told it, by hearing it a thousand times, but only by experience.

Some of you know what we are talking about. You know despair, you know hopeless situations, you know what it is to come to the place where you are finished and throw up your hands. If you do not, you may know it yet. The Lord is after getting us, as many as He can, through to that place where, in and through His Church, death is swallowed up in victory, death is no more. That is practically the last word of the Bible. Nearly the first words of the Bible are about the entrance of death; the tree of life was cut off. At the end of the Bible we read "*Death shall be no more*" (Rev. 21:4). That has got to be wrought out in an instrument, and we know that that process is very practical. The Lord enable us to learn that lesson and gain the vantage ground of the triumph of Christ's resurrection.

We should never expect an end until God says, That is the end! He is the God of hope, "*who... 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*" (1 Pet. 1:3-4). If we leave out the negative and read only the positive statement in the passage which we are considering we read: "*That we should... trust in God who raiseth the dead.*"

22 NOV - The Realm of Spiritual Exercise

"But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11).

If you look to see the object of this exercise, you will discover that it has to do with just one thing – but a very great thing. It is not just development, getting big; it is what we call capacity, that is, ability, or being able for things. That is the Divine object in this exercise, quite clearly set forth in this letter. And capacity, as I am sure you will agree, is a very vital matter. Whether it is in the natural realm or in the spiritual, it does amount to something to have capacity – to have ability. It is a very distressing thing to find how few, even of the Lord's people, have real spiritual capacity. You will see what that means as we go on. But let us get the object of this exercise in view, that we may make no mistake. It is not just to *be* something, but to be able *for* something – that is capacity. In gymnastics you can do it for its own sake, just to develop yourself, just to be something, but the real object is to be able to do things, to be capable of much more.

What is the realm of this exercise? Here it speaks of having the senses exercised. Well, of course, that is very simple and easily understood. In our natural, physical man we have five senses. We have our sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Those are the five senses of our physical natural life. But there is also an inner man called the *"hidden man of the heart"*, and that inward man has what corresponds to the outer man's five senses. There is a faculty of spiritual sight, of spiritual hearing, of spiritual smelling or sensing, of spiritual taste and spiritual touch, and these senses are very important to the life of the inward man – yes, more important even than the senses of the physical man. We know how we feel the tragedy of people who have lost any of those outward senses. It is a great loss; it is an imperfect life, a life of limitation. But it is equally true of the inward man. To be without spiritual sight is a tragic loss and a terrible limitation; or without spiritual hearing, that capacity for answering to the Spirit *"he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith"*: if there is no capacity for hearing, that is a desperate situation.

23 NOV - Exercising Our Spiritual Senses

There can be no development unless you are given something beyond your capacity. It is true in every realm. It means that the Lord is constantly putting you into situations beyond your capacity. If it is a matter of seeing, and you cannot see, what are you going to do when you just cannot see what the Lord means, what the Lord is after, what He is doing? Give it up? Say, 'I cannot see' – that is an end of it and go home? Of course not! We are there for that faculty to be developed and capacity increased. Have we not already proved that through many a dark way? We just cannot see or understand, but we have at least learned something of the ways and mind of the Lord. And in every other way too we are put into positions beyond our capacity. Does that comfort you? Are you out of your depth today? Are you in situations that you just cannot cope with? The explanation is in Hebrews 12.

There is a very great cost bound up with capacity – that is what I find. There have been people of whom we have despaired. We have wondered if ever they really would see, whether they would ever grow at all. They seemed to stay for so long in exactly the same place and with the same measure, and we have despaired. And then the Lord has taken them into a very deep place, breaking and shattering and emptying; and before they are through, things have changed inwardly: they have got a new knowledge of the Lord; they have come out with something which we had despaired of their ever reaching. There is something there now; there is the possibility now that they are going to count for something more. They are seeing.

I do not think there is any other way for increasing capacity. Capacity is a costly thing. We had better face it. Every little bit of increase means agony. There is a big afterward in view. *"All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous"*, and do not expect it to be otherwise - but afterward, and maybe, in measure, in the afterward here, we may be of greater value to the Lord, as He puts us through His school.

24 NOV - The Problem of Suffering

Suffering may include many things; physical, circumstantial, spiritual. It may relate to ourselves or to others. Almost countless are the ways of God's dealings with us, which are most trying and hard to bear. The most acute form of suffering is that which relates to God Himself: His silence; hiding Himself; seeming to have neither knowledge nor care. Prayers seem to be unheard, and are, apparently (we would say positively) unanswered. What is the explanation? Well, the Word of God has made very clear that such an explanation exists.

There is one all-comprehending, all-embracing, all-governing purpose to which God has committed Himself - by creation, by redemption, and by union. That purpose is the conformity of a race to the image of His Son. This is man's chief end and chief good. What more satisfied and 'happy' person is there - even amidst suffering and sorrow - than he or she who is most perfect in patience, love, faith, and the other 'fruits of the Spirit'? If our requests regarding things were granted, while we were left the same people, unchanged in disposition and nature, it would not be long before we should be in the same unhappy condition over other things. There is possible for us some inherent quality that wears out circumstances and reigns above them. Some of the most radiant people have been the greatest sufferers in infirmity, poverty, or other forms of adversity; whilst the most 'privileged' are often the most discontented.

The solution to the problem of suffering does not lie in being philosophical; it is not in fatalistic resignation - 'This is my lot; I suppose I must accept it'. It is not in passive or active suppression of desire. It is far removed from self-pity, bitterness, cynicism, or envy, and the rest of their wretched family of wilderness-makers and wanderers.

We may have to let go the particular occasion of our trouble, and first recognize, and then embrace with our heart, the fact that in the affliction there resides the immense eternal potentiality of an increase of the image of God's Son, which is to be the one and the only character and nature of the eternal kingdom. We have too much visualized the 'Heaven' that is to be, as geographical and pleasurable, without giving sufficient weight to the fact of a nature to be inculcated and perfected.

25 NOV - Why God's Vessels Must Suffer

Why is it that – God willing and purposing a certain object to be accomplished, e.g.: the salvation of souls, the building of the Church, the increase of spiritual measure; and God being Who and What He is, All-mighty, All-wise, All-gracious – the work is fraught with so many problems? The workers are often at the end of themselves; everything is so hard and heartbreaking; and in deepest suffering many die with so little accomplished. Why is the vindication of those who have honestly sought to do the will of God and have suffered deeply at the hands of men, even Christian men, so long delayed?

How much we could enlarge upon the perplexities of the work of the Lord! But if we could say all, does not the same solution apply as above?

It has become almost a platitude now to say that 'God is more concerned for the worker than for the work'. Yes, and, as a proposition, we may quite honestly believe it; but as applied and experienced, it is the root of unspeakably much perplexity and disappointment. Yet there it is: the whole fact that, second causes being admitted or rejected, the work of God has never been something easy or straightforward, with the continuous manifestation of His absolute All-mightiness making difficulties as though they were nothing.

God will never put work or service in the place of character; and, if *we* do that, eternity will reveal that, however much we may have done; we are very small amongst the inhabitants of the Land, whose stature will be measured by 'the measure of Christ'. It would be well if all who contemplate or are engaged in the work of God were governed by this one absolutely final law: that, both as to themselves and as to those amongst whom they minister, the ultimate test is – not how much work is done, but *how much of Christ is present, or results from the ministry*. This might solve many problems, explain many 'strange' ways of God, and seal life with the kind of 'success' that is worthy of the Name in the eyes of Heaven.

26 NOV - The Secret of the Shining Face

But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials, and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king."

But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food. So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables. Daniel 1:8-16 (NASB)

And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel. Acts 6:15 (NASB)

...and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." Acts 7:56 (NASB)

It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. Exodus 34:29-30 (NASB)

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NASB)

You will notice the common feature of all these passages to be *the shining face*. We have been gathered together for a season up here on the mountain with the Lord and we have to go back, to be scattered in different places, and meet the difficult situations, and we want to go back with shining faces. But we want to know the secret of the shining face. That does not need to be taken literally. We may not always have a

countenance that is cracking with mirth, but there is that which even in the midst of adversity and difficulty and suffering and trial speaks of something within the heart that is God's peace, God's rest, God's joy. It is possible to know the peace that passeth understanding. It is possible to know joy unspeakable and full of glory even amidst very great pressure and suffering. It is possible for there to be recognized, even in a pain marked countenance, something that is of God.

What one is speaking of is not necessarily just a shining of our faces, but something shining through our faces, something which our faces indicate which is more than merely human endurance, human bravery and courage; something of the deep strength and grace of God. That is what I mean by the shining face, and in these four instances of which we have read we have the secrets of the shining face in this sense. You know it is that, that is the testimony. It is not always the things that we say, but that which is expressed through us in times of stress and trial and provocation and opposition and antagonism and suffering. It is then that that which is caught, as it were back of our faces, *that* is the testimony.

When it is known that we are undergoing trial, when it is known that we are in suffering, when it is known that others in a different realm would act and speak and react to things in the flesh, as men would react; there is just that betrayal of something of the Lord Jesus. That is the testimony. It is the betraying of the Lord Jesus in the right sense. And it will be very little good to the Lord, very little gain to Him or us, if as we go back and continue in the scenes of our life, and when there is a test, there is not some fuller indication of the Lord Himself in our hearts and lives. People will come to their conclusions on that basis – what we reveal under pressure, under trial.

27 NOV - Getting Your Eye Where God's Eye Is

It is a wonderful thing to recognize that the Lord's glory became imparted to Moses by reason of that which became the common object of their eyes. What the Lord was looking at, Moses was looking at, and as they both looked at it together they shared the same glory. When does the Lord's own face light up with glory? When is the Father's face full of glory? When He looks upon the Lord Jesus. The tabernacle was only the Lord Jesus in a representation, and it was the Lord Jesus in all His Mediatorial, Priestly Person and work gathered up in a great system, but it was the person of the Lord Jesus as relating to man's fellowship with God—the place, the sphere where God and man come into oneness, where God can, without sacrificing His holiness, have fellowship with man and where man can without being consumed by the very holiness of God, have fellowship with God. From Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, with a central-most reality of the mercy seat, He will speak with you face to face.

God has set forth Christ as a propitiation. God sees beyond the pattern to the reality, His Son, and it was Christ Who was in the eye of the Father in all His wonderful, mediatorial work to bring men nigh to God and God nigh to man. When that is in the eye of God, His face is full of glory, and when we get what is in His eye, we partake of the glory of the shining face of God.

Simply, it just means that when we are occupied with the Lord Jesus in all that He is from the Father to us and to the Father for us, when we are occupied with Him, then we know the shining face. Be occupied with anything else and you lose the shining face. Be occupied with yourself and your own spiritual life and condition, so that you are always self-analyzing, and it will not be long before you have lost the shining face.

Keep your eye upon Jesus and you will know the secret of the shining face. Look around on things as they are in the world and you will lose it. The secret of the shining face is to get God's thought about the Lord Jesus, to get your eye where God's eye is. That is tremendously important.

28 NOV - "He Wist Not That His Face Shone"

The only hope for God of the ultimate realization of His purpose is to look at the Lord Jesus. He has all the guarantee in Him. And He says, "Because He is what He is, my end is secure, I have My Sabbath, My rest, My eye is upon Him." And until we have seen that God has reached His end in Christ, and our eyes are upon Him, we have not got the secret of hope and confidence and rest and satisfaction. It is the secret. It is a wonderful reality.

I cannot tell you what a blessing this brought to my own heart when the Lord showed me what He had made the Lord Jesus to Himself on my behalf. I was always craving to bring to the Lord something that would satisfy Him in myself. If I could bring to the Lord a perfect life, that would please Him and satisfy Him, and He could be perfectly satisfied with me! But it was impossible and it seemed no good trying. The more you try, the further away you seem to be, and the longer you live the more you know the utter deceitfulness of your own heart.

Oh, to be able to come before the Lord with something that would please Him! And now the Lord says, "I have made the provision for all that. I have provided you with absolute spiritual and moral perfection. I have found those in One, and I have put them into your hands. I accept you in Him, I am satisfied with you in Him, you are accepted in the Beloved." You cannot bring perfection to God, and that is the only thing that will satisfy Him, but the Lord Jesus fulfills (fills full) all the Divine requirement.

In Leviticus, God speaks about the offering. *"If any man desires to bring an offering,"* then the Lord provides as to the offering. You have got to desire to bring an offering. And you know quite well it is no use bringing to God anything that is not absolutely perfect, and where will you find that? That only which is according to Christ satisfies God. When this breaks upon us, it is rest. It is the shining countenance. When we get to the perfections of His Son, we have found the good pleasure of God and we stand, not looking at God askance, but we stand by the side of God and we are both looking at the same thing and sharing the same glory. God's objective is the Lord Jesus.

Moses did not know that his face was shining. It is a great thing to be occupied with the Lord Jesus inside, and people will take note of it. *"He wist not that his face shone,"* but others did, and that is the important thing.

29 NOV - Daniel's Secret of the Shining Face

Daniel has learned the secret of the shining face, and there is something deeper here, more testing. Daniel is in Babylon. Babylon is in the ascendancy. Jerusalem is in ruins. We know what these things mean spiritually. We know that that which really is wholly according to God, that which was at the beginning, is not to be found today, that where the Holy Spirit absolutely governs and where it is all the Lord Jesus. You do not find that in the ascendancy today. It is the other religious system made by man that is in the ascendancy. That is Babylon. And the mass of the Lord's people are in captivity to it, a man-made Christian system.

And here is Daniel, seeing that which is according to God broken, ruined, and he sees this other thing, that is not according to God, holding sway and engulfing the mass of the Lord's people. The wonder of it all is that Daniel did not accept Babylon. He repudiated Babylon and clung to Jerusalem. If Jerusalem is literally in ruins, to Daniel it is not so. He does not accept the things seen. He knows that Babylon is only a temporary thing and that God is going to have His testimony again. And God is going, through a remnant, to get His house again. He knows that God cannot be defeated and so he will not defile himself with the king's dainties. God is his life and he repudiates that which seems to have the upper hand for the time being and clings to God.

Daniel also sees beyond and sees when Babylon and all the other kingdoms will be shattered. If you accept Babylon you will lose the shining face. If you accept religion as it is today and say, "It is the best there is," you will get involved in something that is not of God. And people more and more today are revolting, and are not satisfied. People say, "Oh, to be out of it, to find the real thing." God is going to have His real thing. God cannot be robbed of that thing which He has set His heart upon.

Let us set our hearts upon it, and not accept anything else. It is so easy to say, "Christianity is in a mess, but we must make the best of a bad job." But there is no joy along that line. God is working today secretly even in Babylon. And when we come to the book of Ezra, we find that God acts sovereignly. He stirs up the spirit of Cyrus and he makes a proclamation. That is God's outside action. But there is a company with whom God has secretly worked in Babylon.

30 NOV - Greater Is He That Is In You

Stephen -- all that were in the council, looking upon him, saw his face as it were the face of an angel. What is the secret? I believe the second passage is the secret. *"And lifting up his eyes he said, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."* Stephen was a man full of the Holy Ghost and faith, and the Holy Spirit had drawn Stephen's attention to the Lord Jesus in glory. Read Acts 7. It is almost matchless in New Testament literature, and see the place that he gives to the Lord Jesus. He heads it right up to the Lord Jesus in glory and, while he is under the test, that is the thing that sustains him, and when he comes to the last moment he sees literally with his eyes what he had been seeing with his heart all the way through. And that just means this -- when we see the Lord Jesus in glory, we have seen this, that God having got Him there, the Son of Man, having got one all-inclusive Man there, it is all right for us. He can get us there.

That One has simply fathomed all judgment, all death, all the power of Satan and the grave. He has exhausted all and God has got Him there. He had all the sin of all the creation from Adam onward heaped upon Him, and then that One came to glory. He had all the power and fury of the devil heaped upon Him, and God got that One to glory; the power of Death and Hades being liberated upon Him, and God brought that One to glory. We will never have to go through all that He went through. Stephen saw that one Man in the glory, being such a One as He was, is the guarantee that God could get him there, let all hell rush upon him. It is the secret of the shining face.

Sometimes we may, by reason of many things, wonder if we shall get to glory, if we shall hold out to the end, but, blessed be God, he is capable of getting us there. It is not our doing, it is the Lord's doing. Why? Because He has already got our forerunner in His presence. That bears you up in the time of opposition. And men filled with the Holy Spirit are especially the object of stones.

It is a blessed thing to realize that the One Who has gone up there in His great triumph is within us. It does not depend on what is outside of us. But the Lord is inside us, Who has already overcome. We are familiar with the terms but it is a great day when suddenly we wake up to know that Christ is in us. Has it ever come to you by a sudden flash of light? Christ in you! Read 2 Cor. 13:5, Eph. 3:17. All that which is around you is no match for Him. *"Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."* (1 John 4:4).

DECEMBER

1 DEC - The Marks of Christlikeness

The marks of Christlikeness come about by the measure in which we have communion with Him, so that the marks of Christlikeness are the result of faithfulness in communion.

How shall I be like Christ? How will you be like Christ? How will others see the marks of Jesus in us? Just in so far as we are faithful in our communion. You know that in everyday life. Start the day without your quiet time, without your prayer, and it will not be long before there are other marks in your life than the marks of Jesus. Neglect prayer, neglect communion with your Lord, and the traces of the Lord will soon disappear from view. On the other hand, look after the matter of communion, preserve that quiet time, those quiet times, look after your times of prayer, see to it that He has a place in your heart, a large place in your heart every day and you need not worry about being like the Lord Jesus. All the worry to be like the Lord Jesus will not make any difference. People who walk closely with Him, keep in touch with Him, look after the prayer life, do carry those marks of His restfulness, His peacefulness, His patience, His gentleness, His kindness, His love; the marks of Jesus. That is how it comes about.

I do not tell you to strive and I do not tell you to strive and struggle to be like Jesus. I say, keep in touch with Jesus. Do believe me, for I have gone this way. I know, oh! I know, on the one hand the blessedness, and on the other hand the bitterness of suffering bound up with this very thing. The blessedness of looking after the quiet times, the prayer times, the communion life with the Lord! Oh yes! May I urge upon you to see to faithfulness in communion with your Lord, and, perhaps without knowing it (and it will be better so), you will be bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus, His likeness. I do not want you to be able to go about showing people how like Christ you are. We want it to be there and yet not to know it. It will be there if you look after the life of communion. So be faithful in this. And then? Well, what matters? Paul said, *"Henceforth let no man trouble me"*. It would all be in vain. They will come and try to draw away, to entice; the world will seek to allure. They will try to upset and annoy, but I belong to Jesus. I am satisfied with Jesus. I have all that I want in Him. *"Let no man trouble me; I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus"*. May it be like that with all of us!

2 DEC - The Marks of His Ownership

We all know the test of loyalty to the Lord in this world. The world is reaching out a hand, as it were, to come and interfere with our loyalty to the Lord Jesus; just not to let it be known that we belong to Him. Such are the standards today, the mental standards of life, that it is so widely thought to be an unmanly, unwomanly thing to be a Christian. It is not robust, it is not strong, you must be of an inferior kind if you are a Christian. That is how it is, we know it quite well. This world despises Christians, and the temptation to all Christians is in some way to be Christians without "giving it away", without letting it be too obvious, and so we hide behind quite a lot of things. "We do not want to make a show of religion"; "we do not want to thrust religion down people's throats"; "we do not want to offend people and upset our chances of influencing them by giving it away too soon". All sorts of things like that, hiding round corners, thinking we are going to get a better advantage; we are really going to serve the Lord's interests much better by going carefully, going slowly, and all the time taking cover and camouflaging.

We belong to the Lord; we are glad that we belong to the Lord; we are very glad to call Him "Master"; we have no compromise over that. We belong to the Lord and we tell Him that, and we will tell every other Christian that, but is it only in the realm where we are accepted, where we know we are accepted, where we know it is quite safe and quite comfortable to let it be known? What about this world? The marks of His ownership. Remember Paul and that shipwreck. How outstanding he was! He warned them, and then the time came when they were at their wit's end, and he came up to the Master of the ship and he said, *"Be of good cheer. The Lord, Whose I am, and Whom I serve..."* There is no covering there. He let it be known. I do not think I need try to drive that home. That lies here, right at the beginning, the marks of faithfulness and loyalty in our allegiance to Him, Whom we are glad to call Master and Lord; to Whom we really do owe everything. Is it not just a little unfair, to say the least of it, when we are prepared in secret with Him to acknowledge that we owe Him everything, to be ashamed to let it be known out in the world Whose we are?

3 DEC - Behold, I Make All Things New

In Hebrews 13 we read of the blood of "*an eternal covenant*". That does not refer to a 'future' eternity. That word points to the past, a past as seen from our standpoint; because for God the past and the future are alike: an eternal present time. But the Word, being written for our sakes, and taking account of our limited realm, wants to show us that in the foreknowledge of God the blood of an eternal covenant was already set apart. Then this creation came into being. It appeared out of the chaotic state of a judged world, and "*it was very good.*" After that came the fall. Through sin the evil one got the upper hand and saw to it that the history of the world became one of darkness and human misery. Now the creation is waiting for the redemption — "*the unveiling of the sons of God*".

This leads us to the second phase of God's purpose, the Cross of the Son of Man. In Him appears, at the same time, the new creation. On the one hand the old creation was judged, and came definitely to an end in Him as our Representative. In the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, all have died. On the other hand He is the resurrection and the life, "*the firstborn from among the dead*". But this new creation is not like the old one. The new heaven and the new earth are of a different order. We now live "*by faith and not by sight*". It is a spiritual world, entirely new; new in an all-inclusive sense.

The third phase is presented to us in the book of the Revelation, chapter 21: "*Behold, I make all things new.*" That is the new creation in its consummation. It is a spiritual creation as the ultimate outcome of the Cross of Christ. This spiritual creation will take a form which is adequate to its nature: a new heaven and a new earth.

4 DEC - God Is the Source of All that is New

If ever we see the necessity of a new creation, the need of an absolute new creation, we see it here. *Everything* must become new. The Word of God says: "*Behold, I make all things new!*" God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Again we come to the book of Genesis. "*The earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.*" And God said, "*Raised from the dead through the glory of the Father!*" God raised His Son from the dead. He brought Him forth as "*the firstborn from the dead*". It is a new creation which is rising. In Christ we too are a new creation. It is true, without a doubt: "*All things are new*".

Our wisdom is a new wisdom. Our strength is a new strength. Our heart is a new heart. Our capacities are new capacities. All things are become new. It is Christ in us!

I realize in a new way that we have to be very diligent to see to it that we do nothing out of our own strength, that God is doing all. Looking into the work of my own mind there are my own thoughts, there is the strength of my own desires, strong passions of heart and will. But I ask the Lord to keep me in dread of myself, for this whole creation, all of what I am in Adam, is cursed. It lies where God has abandoned it. He cannot use it. Everything now must be of God.

I do want to urge upon you to have more heart-searching in this matter. Oh, there is a wonderful new creation with divine resources! There are marvelous possibilities, because they are God's possibilities for us. All things are possible from God's side. Shall we not take the place where all things are possible? We can be there where all things are of God. HE is initiating things, HE is doing all. Let us reach out to come into our God-appointed place in Christ — the fullness of God in Him. Therefore we have to come to the Cross, and accept its implications from both sides. We must see that awful side of the Cross of Jesus Christ — the curse of the cross — that He was crucified for us, and we in Him. We dare not bring anything of that old creation into the new life, for it would continually come under God's judgment. The day might come when all our work would have to be burnt. There is a big difference between that which is done for the Lord, and that which is of the Lord in us. "*He that is hanged is accursed of God.*" With Christ we have hung upon the tree, and God has forsaken us in His Cross. But that is not the end of all, but the beginning of a far bigger thing, something altogether new. Let me say it again: we cannot come into the new thing unless the old things are passed away. "*Behold, I make all things new!*"

5 DEC - The Antichrist in Us

The hallmark of the natural man is self-sufficiency. He always finds the springs of his resources in himself. We see that in Adam. At the beginning up to a certain point his resources were in God. He drew his instruction and wisdom from God. Everything was from God. By the way of obedience to God he was in fellowship with Him. But then came the moment when he began to act out from himself. By a subtle insinuation of the devil he began to reason out things for himself, until he became deceived by his own will, and mistrust against God crept into his mind. He took things out of God's hands into his own hands. He ceased to draw his resources from God and thought he could have them in himself. That is the attitude of the natural man in Adam up to this day. The natural man acts according to his own natural wisdom. He seeks to reason out a situation, weighing up things for and against it, and proceeding according to what he thinks to be 'common sense'.

But notice, as the natural man develops in history, the end of this dispensation will produce a natural man (humanity in its fallen state) developed to the utmost. There will be dictators, supermen, acting from themselves. They will be a law to themselves, without consulting others. What they feel, desire and reason out must be done. That state of things will lead up to Antichrist. He will be a self-contained man and represent the sum total of all that is natural — reason, desire, will. He will not hold God in reverence, but will be bigger than God. In him the human race will be represented in its fully developed fallen nature, turning that whole race against God.

What is true of Antichrist is true, in part, of every member of the human race. The natural man moves out from himself, but the result is always death. If we project our own will, our own desires, our own reason into things, however alive they may appear, the result will be death. Only that which comes out from God is Life. In connection with this the meaning of the word of the Lord Jesus is of primary importance: "*The Son can do nothing of Himself.*" If others believe they can, the Son cannot. Here is the tremendous difference between the Lord Jesus and ourselves. He can only move as from the Father. He can only go if the Father leads Him.

6 DEC - Christ, Our Sufficiency

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ..." Eph. 1:3-4

"...They drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ". 1 Cor. 10:1-4

"This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel... who received living oracles to give unto us." Acts 7:38

"...Our sufficiency is from God..." 2 Cor. 3:5

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves." 2 Cor. 4:7

All these passages have to do, in one way or another, with sufficiency. That sufficiency is bound up with our Lord Jesus Christ. Now what occupies us here is touching a question about which every Christian should be quite sure and clear as to its answer: What is the supreme purpose which governs the life of a child of God? It is very important that we should be able to answer that question. I believe the right answer is: the supreme purpose of the life of the child of God is — to learn Christ.

God has filled Christ with all His fulness. In Him dwell all the riches of knowledge and wisdom. And that fulness is for us. The apostle Paul makes this statement, saying, that we are *"blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"*. Thus our business as believers is to learn Christ — to come, in a living way, into the fulness of Jesus Christ. That governs everything. Every dealing of God with His child is to bring that one into a fuller knowledge of Christ. All the rest in our life will be but the outcome and the result of that knowledge.

I have heard many people say that the purpose of God, in having saved us, is that we should save others. But this is only a part of God's purpose. There can be no real service for the Lord apart from a personal knowledge of the Lord. We can never lead anyone into a knowledge which is not ours; neither can we lead anyone further than we know Christ in a living way. So everything depends on the measure of our knowledge of Jesus Christ.

7 DEC - Learning Christ

It may startle you if I say that we can only know the sufficiency of our Lord Jesus Christ if we are willing to go into the wilderness.

Now, the wilderness has always been the best place for spiritual education. You may think that there is not much to be learnt in a wilderness. Nevertheless it is so; it is the best place to learn heavenly things. It was so with Abraham; it was so in the case of Moses; it was true with Israel. The wilderness had also a definite place in the life of Paul. Whether we take it in a literal or a spiritual way, the fact is that God's people were, again and again, sent into the wilderness. Many of us know what such a 'wilderness' means.

When God puts His hand upon a people, He always cuts them off from everything which is not of Himself; that is, He cuts them off from the whole realm of their natural life, and puts them, so to speak, outside of the world of nature. We see this in the case of the people of Israel. Pharaoh was allowing them to go into the desert; he wanted them to serve God in a half-hearted way: partly in Egypt and partly in the land. But that could never serve God. God's irreducible minimum was: not a hoof was to be left behind. God's people should be absolutely separated from Egypt. Therefore the Red Sea came between His people and the Egyptians. God saw to it that they remained in the wilderness until they had learnt their lesson. God had some great lessons to teach them there. Israel's sojourn in the wilderness had to serve coming generations as an example. The dispensation of the church — yet far away in the future — was to derive its instruction from them. In the wilderness God laid down eternal principles. The things which happened to Israel "*were our examples*".

God cuts His people off from the whole realm of nature. You know how little the natural man prevails in the wilderness. It doesn't matter how intellectual, how mighty the natural resources are. It is not of much use in a wilderness. You may be an excellent student, a splendid businessman or organizer, yet all this is not much good in a wilderness. For a man who is planted down alone in the middle of a wilderness, his own cleverness is not of much avail, his natural capacities will not bring him very far.

So you see what matters. When God gets us into His hand, He takes us right out of the realm of what we are by nature. That is the meaning of the wilderness. God's object is to make Christ everything. So long as we can do things, so long as we have resources in ourselves, we cannot know Jesus Christ. Christ will remain an unexplored realm for us.

8 DEC - The Basis of Spiritual Life

The most important thing in the believer's life is to learn Christ. *"In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."* That fulness is for us, for: *"In Him we are made full."* And because Christ, as our fulness, is in the glory, therefore Paul writes to the Ephesians: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."* That means we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in our Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenlies. That implies that our relationship with the Lord Jesus must be a heavenly relationship. Only as we come into a heavenly union with Christ can we partake of these heavenly blessings.

There has to be a wilderness first in our lives before we can experimentally know the all-sufficiency of Christ for us. Israel's life in the wilderness meant a complete separation from the old nature, and an utter dependence upon resources outside of this earth. The wilderness in itself provided nothing for them, and all their natural capacities were of no use in such a place. But these conditions were just given to make the wilderness a place of revelation where they had to learn Christ, in a special way, as their sufficiency. Christ is the living Bread which came down from heaven. He is the Water of Life. The *"spiritual rock that followed them"* was Christ.

Let us therefore emphasize again that in order to know Jesus Christ in fulness we have to come to the place where the world and all its natural resources cannot help us, and have to be completely ruled out.

Jesus Christ Himself accepted that position, that He voluntarily chose to live on a faith-basis. He chose to depend entirely on His Father. He could do absolutely nothing without Him; He had nothing Himself but was drawing everything from the Father. That is the more negative side of our meditation. Now let us turn to the positive side.

What is the basis of a life lived in a heavenly union with Christ, where all the resources have to be of a heavenly nature? The answer is: That basis is the Holy Spirit.

9 DEC - The Secret of His Triumphant Life

When Israel was separated from Egypt, and brought out into the wilderness, God gave them the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night. That cloud is a type of the Holy Spirit. The forty years in the wilderness typify that Israel's life became entirely governed by the Holy Spirit. When we come to the Lord Jesus we see the reality of this, and how true it was in His case. When He stepped out into public life, God separated Him for His special ministry. He came under the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22). From that moment His whole life was governed by the Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:14).

If we want to live a heavenly life in the wilderness, the Holy Spirit is essential. He is given for that very purpose. Through the Holy Spirit the same resources are at our disposal upon which Christ, in the days of His flesh, had been living. It is very important to recognize the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ voluntarily accepted our position, and was fashioned like a man, taking the place of one who is dependent on God for everything. If we do that, we shall rejoice to live a life which is governed by the Holy Spirit, a life through which our Lord Jesus Christ shall be glorified, even as He, living in the Father, glorified the Father. This then is our relationship with Christ. The basis of a heavenly life is the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus lived His life in the Holy Spirit. By that Spirit He was doing His work. He moved continually, in all His ways, as governed by the Holy Spirit. He refused to move or act under the influence of man, or be pressed by circumstances. He only did that which the Holy Spirit witnessed in Him. The secret of His triumphant life was the government of the Holy Spirit.

Now what is true of the Lord Jesus has to be true for us. It is the same Spirit which is anointing us. We have come to see that this world is a wilderness. We are called to let go our natural resources, and to live a life entirely out from God, in direct communication with Him. In the things of God we cannot use natural resources. Neither the world nor we in ourselves can produce anything for God. But let us place the emphasis upon the positive side: the Spirit of Anointing makes everything possible. The Holy Spirit, the Anointing which we have received, brings us into oneness with Christ. Just as Christ was one with the Father by the Spirit, so we are made one with Christ by the same Spirit. This is a wonderful union! It means that the Lord Himself is doing the work in us in order to work it out through us.

10 DEC - Being a Tool in His Hands

Let us realize that God Himself will do His work. It cannot be done through our trying to do it. To ask Him to help us to do His work is a great mistake. If it is the Lord's work, then it is HE who is doing it. He never gives His own work into our hands. The Lord does not give His work to you or to me. We are but His employees, like the workman who uses his tools. A tool never thinks out what it should do. It simply yields to the hand of its master. He has the plan. He has the skill and the strength, and the tool is only expressing what is in the mind of the workman. The responsibility lies with HIM. The tool is only allowed to do what the master wants to do through his instrument. Imagine an instrument getting up in the morning determined to do this or that, hoping the master would help it. This is not the right attitude. Let us think of the tool which takes this attitude and says: "Now Master, you know what you will do. You have the plan. You know how you will work, and at what time you will do it. I am here at your disposal. I am willing to serve you in any way you please. I am altogether consecrated to you and your purpose. I look to you concerning the work which lies before us. You must be the wisdom, the strength and the power of endurance behind me. If I should become blunt you can sharpen me again. Everything depends upon you, but I am one with you."

This is a very simple illustration of the truth. That was exactly the relationship of the Lord Jesus with His Father. He said: "*My Father works even until now, and I work.*" He only worked because His Father worked. He also said: "*The works which the Father has given me... the same works I do.*" The link between Him and the Father was the Holy Spirit. He brought about that marvelous oneness. Now we are under the same anointing. That anointing is the guarantee for meeting every need to which we are called, and to do it at the right time.

When we are under the anointing, which brings us into oneness with our Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenlies, there is no need to get into a state of anxiety concerning 'our works'. The Holy Spirit will come in and show us where we have to act as under the Lord's commission, and where we have to stand back and wait — in spite of apparent need and pressure which comes upon us — because the Lord's time has not yet come to meet that need.

11 DEC - Abiding In the Anointing

"The anointing teaches you concerning all things." Has this not been true many a time in our lives? For instance, a difficult situation arises, a problem has to be solved, and we are asked to meet that need. Now we get worked up into a state of anxiety, but all our thinking and planning is getting us nowhere. We cannot see what we should do; we have no light. But when we have handed it over to the Lord, when we put our confidence in Him, trusting Christ to be our wisdom and strength, the light comes, and we are able to give the needed counsel, and touch the vital points as we, in ourselves, would never be able to do. It just comes by revelation.

The experience is true: *"In that hour it shall be told you what to speak."* The Holy Spirit is given us that we may, through Him, continually stand in unbroken and direct fellowship with our Lord in heaven. Immediately we begin to work at things with our mind, and count upon our resources, or look at circumstances, we take upon us a responsibility which is beyond us, and which we cannot meet. The result is that we become anxious, worried and fretful. We begin to ask other people to tell us what to do. We look round for some help from outside, and thus enter more and more into the realm of the natural world which, we know, cannot help us in heavenly things. But if we abide under the anointing, we have the certainty that all we have to do is but a part of a completed work.

How often attempts were made upon the life of the Lord Jesus to destroy it. His life was beset with danger. He had hardly stepped out into public ministry, and we see His murderers at work. We are told that such an attempt was made when He went into the synagogue of Nazareth. The people were offended by His words and led Him to the brow of the hill of their town to cast Him over. But He went right through their midst out of their hands, and their attempt failed. He could not be destroyed even one day before His time because of the anointing. God had ordered His life to the very "hour". *"No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of myself"*. What is anointed and abiding under the anointing will complete the work. We too can be assured to complete the work to which God has called us in life, and for which He has appointed us in Christ. *"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them."* What a mighty comfort to know that it is the anointing which takes the full responsibility for the completion of our life! So we just have to abide under the anointing.

12 DEC - An Open Heaven for the Spiritual

Now let us turn to Hebrews 9:3-4: "*And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies*". We have here the tabernacle as it was in the earth, with its holy place and its most holy. The holy place represented the earth. There we have the candlestick, the altar of incense, and the table of showbread, pointing — in type — to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now Jesus Christ has gone through the veil into the place of future realities, where everything is Christ, Christ All and in all. Heaven is open since Christ rent the veil. For the natural man heaven is closed. This includes not only the heaven we may go to one day, but it represents a sphere, the present realm of God's activity, which we can share in union with Him.

We too, have an open heaven. Paul says: "*Our citizenship is in heaven*"! If our walk on this earth is to be a heavenly one, we must have an open heaven, for we are utterly dependent upon heaven for spiritual blessing. The door of heaven is closed to the natural man. Even a man like Nicodemus cannot see it, and even less enter it.

Let us repeat that the 'holy place' of the tabernacle represents the earth, and the 'most holy place' heaven. In the one place we have the types of heavenly things. In the other was God Himself. Between the two was the veil. Death would meet anyone who would go through that veil into the most holy place, except by God's special command.

The letter to the Hebrews tells us further that that veil was a type of Christ's flesh. There are two sides in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ: an earthly side (towards the earth) and a heavenly one (towards God). Between heaven and earth was the veil, and Christ's flesh was that veil. When Jesus Christ died on the cross the veil in the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. Now the types gave place to the reality. What was but suggestive, pointing to God, passed away, and man was allowed to draw near to God. The flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ is speaking of human limitation which formed a barrier between the realities of God and man. If we look into the holy place of the tabernacle we have features and illustrations of heavenly things because of man's limitation.

13 DEC - The Open Heaven Today

Now we see heaven and earth united in Christ risen and ascended. He is the mediator. He is the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream, and upon which the angels of God were ascending and descending. The Lord referred to that when speaking to Nathanael, saying: *"Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."* What was but a type at Bethel has become a living reality in Christ. He is uniting heaven and earth. In Him — in the two sides of His nature — God and man are brought together, heaven and earth are united. He is the way, the only way of communication for heaven and earth. Union with Christ means to live under an open heaven, in the presence of God, and in all the reality of the new life.

The Holy Spirit is given us on that ground. He came upon the Lord Jesus after His baptism in the Jordan. The heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. Now Christ risen means an open heaven. The Spirit of the Anointing comes upon us because the crucified One is risen. He comes to us out of an open heaven which the Son of God has opened for us.

But what was the value of the anointing? It is to bring us unto a heavenly union with God. The Lord Jesus said: *"When he, the Spirit... is come, he shall guide you into all the truth."* And John confirms this in saying: *"The anointing which ye received... teaches you concerning all things."* That is represented by the angels ascending and descending. The Holy Spirit is communicating with us, but Christ is the ladder, reaching from earth to heaven. Where is that ladder? It is not in the world. The ladder is set up in our hearts. It is Christ in our hearts. There is an open way from heaven in our hearts, Christ Himself, leading us into the very presence of God. The Holy Spirit moves in relation to Christ to bring us into communion with Christ, just as Christ is in communion with His Father.

The all-sufficiency of Christ is secured for us on that basis. We are in the heavenlies, because Christ is in us. If joined to His person the limitations are gone. There is a direct and immediate communion with God, and the Holy Spirit can reveal to us heavenly things.

14 DEC - Obedience – The Way to God's Fullness

"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish His work." John 4:31-34

In that statement of our Lord Jesus there are three things implied. Firstly: the Lord Jesus has a secret source of strength. *"I have meat to eat that ye know not"*.

Secondly: There is a link between the will of God and LIFE. *"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me."* We remember that at this time the Lord Jesus was hungry and very faint. He sat down at the well weary from His journey. When the disciples came back from the town where they had bought food, they found Him remarkably revived. They thought that somebody had brought Him some food. But the Lord explained to them that the renewal of His life had come from doing His Father's will. That shows a close connection between the doing of the will of God and 'Life'.

Thirdly: The link between this is a divine purpose and the fulfilment of it. *"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish His work"*. The Father's will represented a divine purpose, and the Lord Jesus says that He was linked with that purpose. To accomplish that divine purpose was a greater satisfaction to Him than earthly things. We can say that He found His Life in doing the will of God.

Therefore, an important factor for us is that obedience is the way to God's fullness. It was so in the case of the Lord Jesus. When He said: *"For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholds the Son, and believeth on Him, should have eternal life"*, it clearly shows that union with Christ, according to God's will, means Life for us. Thus God's will is in vital relationship and oneness with the Son.

15 DEC - Obedience Is Life

Obedience towards the revealed will of God means deliverance from death. That is what we mean by the maintenance of our life. This attitude was true of the Son of God throughout His life. Being obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, He overcame death. Therefore He is alive for evermore. So everything is bound up with obedience in the matter of life. Immediately we withhold obedience to God, we arrest the Life of the Lord in us, and make it impossible to go on. Obedience is Life.

This spiritual meat is not only maintaining our Life, it also increases our Life. It is leading us into the fulness of Christ. We grow by taking that meat, and Life increases by obedience. In Philippians 2 we are told that the Lord Jesus was obedient to the Father to the uttermost, *"wherefore also God highly exalted Him and gave unto him the name which is above every name."* That is fulness resultant from obedience. Every fresh act of obedience leads us into a greater fulness in Christ, into spiritual enlargement. But disobedience brings limitation and holds up the flow of Life.

This then, is the meaning of spiritual food: the doing of His will, being obedient in all things. This spiritual feeding is related to our union with Christ in His resurrection. It is a living upon that which Christ is in death and resurrection.

In the background of John chapter 6 we have the Passover. In connection with what that means spiritually, the Lord Jesus fed a great multitude. The Jews were about to eat the Passover lamb. But before that took place we have here a hungry multitude, and He — God's Lamb — feeds them with bread saying: *"I am the bread of life."* He links that with the Passover, the Cross, the Lamb slain, saying in effect: "I am yours. In my death and resurrection, that is, in ME you have Life." It is Christ imparted to us.

16 DEC - The Hidden Manna

Now, what is God's purpose for us? The Lord Jesus said that the will of the Father was *"to accomplish His work"*. What was that work? Let us look once more at chapter 4 and the need of that woman of Samaria. She did not know the true life. When she came to the well she was in great need. Brought into a conversation with the Lord concerning life, she eventually saw that Christ was the Life. *"He that believes on Me has eternal life."* And the woman believed. When the disciples came back from the town they found the Lord Jesus wonderfully renewed. He was fully satisfied, because He had accomplished the will of the Father. What was that will? It was to give Life to all whom the Father had given Him.

God's work is to lead poor souls to know the Life in Christ. When we fulfil our ministry in being channels of Life to others, we shall soon discover that this is more satisfying than anything else. If you have led a soul to Christ you know what satisfaction means. To carry the divine Life to needy souls fills the heart with such joy and satisfaction, that earthly desires fade away. Let us seek to lead poor sinners to Christ, for when we are in that work we shall know what true Life is, a life of perfect obedience to God, devoted to the Father's will. This was the law of Life of the Lord Jesus. This is the hidden Manna, the secret sustenance of our life. Those who do not know the Lord know nothing of this. But he who lives out of Christ knows that meat. He knows that to do the will of God is Life. The more we are obedient to that divine will, the more the rivers of His Life will flow in us. Let us seek that kind of meat which the world does not know, but of which the Lord said: *"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish his work."*

17 DEC - The True Peace and Rest

In the letter to the Hebrews we read much of rest. It is the rest in Christ. His rest has to be our rest. I am not going to try to tell you that we must be sinlessly perfect, or that we can never sin again. But we must recognize that the sin-question has to be dealt with first. All our sins are put away in Christ. Jesus Christ has delivered us once and for all from sin. *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus"*. No condemnation! Why? Because Christ Himself has dealt abidingly with the sin-question of the past, the present and the future. All that which separated us from God because of sin is forgiven, and we are placed by faith into a position of complete justification before God. Even when we sin again there is forgiveness which abides. Our redemption is an eternal redemption, for it is written: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"*, and *"the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us (keeps on cleansing) from all sin"*.

It is now a matter of our union with Him. If we abide in that union with Christ we need not be under condemnation for five minutes. If, when we have failed, we recognize and confess our sins, they will be forgiven us. So the ground of inward peace and liberty is in Christ. We are delivered through Christ, and in Him. We have to take the word in Romans 8 seriously. We have to stand on it full of joy: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death."* That is a condition resulting from a position. *"IN CHRIST"* there is liberty, there is no condemnation. Just as Christ abode in the Father and had perfect peace as to sin, so we abiding in Christ can have perfect peace. It is not the peace from sin extricated from us, but the peace resulting from the continuation of the cleansing virtue of the Blood.

But how do we get experimentally over our divided nature into such a oneness, such a rest, such a peace? The way is just this: as the Lord Jesus gains the upper hand in our hearts, we become more and more one with Him. As we more and more surrender to Him, all the conflict of mind, heart and will ceases. Christ's attitude was absolute abandonment to the Father. He was holding back nothing, ready to do all His will. There was no conflict about it. His whole being was one with the Father. As we let go the self-life, letting Christ get the mastery in us, He brings to an end all the inward conflict. A heart wholly the Lord's is a heart at rest, a heart conformed to the image of Christ.

18 DEC - The Only Begotten Son

As Son of God the Lord Jesus represents that side of truth in which God Himself was manifested in flesh. After the fall God never again entrusted His work to man. *"God was in Christ."* Christ was *Immanuel, God is with us*. The title Son of Man shows us another side of Christ: God is recovering in the form of man and for man what he has lost. It means God has come down to this earth as man; He has identified Himself with man in order to redeem him. But that title 'Son of Man' goes far beyond the ordinary human level. Our Lord Jesus Christ stands far above all other men in His nature. He is the Son of Man from heaven, or, as the Scriptures say, *"who is in heaven"*. That could not be said of any other man. They all were from the earth. Christ alone was from heaven as *"the only begotten Son"*. It is important to understand the meaning of this.

The Lord Jesus was not altogether the only begotten Son. That expression has nothing to do with begetting, for the Scriptures tell us that every believer is begotten of God. Now it does not mean that. That expression has to do with the kind of birth. The Lord Jesus was uniquely begotten; He was the only one of this kind. He stood alone as such. All of us have been begotten through the Word of Christ and the Spirit. But all of us are sinners by nature, because *"that which is born of the flesh is flesh"*. Therefore Paul says of us who are *"in Christ"* that *"the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness"*. Over against that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in flesh was something unique. There was no sin in Him who had come in the likeness of sinful flesh. The Son of God was once for all and in a unique way born. That is the meaning of *"the only begotten Son"*. He is the Son of Man out from heaven. Both His titles are divine and belong to heaven. As Son of Man and Son of God He is different from all other men. We must not separate these two titles.

As to the practical application, a very great deal is being bound up with the fact that the Lord Jesus was the Son of God. Notice how often the Lord Jesus refers to His sonship, how much depended upon that for Him. It meant everything to Him. If He had not known it He would have been without the main strength which characterised His life. He lived triumphantly and worked mightily and effectively, because He knew that He was in that essential relationship with His Father.

19 DEC - Our Divine Sonship

Let us be diligent that we too derive our strength from the living knowledge that we are, through our Lord Jesus Christ, sons of God. The very fact that He was the Son of God brought to Him a wonderful strength which made Him superior to all other men, in position as well as a person. It was a right kind of superiority, and marked by deepest humility. He could truly say of Himself: *"I am meek and lowly in heart"*. Yet there was a wonderful strength and dignity about Him. Despised of men, with no earthly estate, He could lift up His head like a king. The consciousness that He possessed – what no man had – was without any self-assertiveness. It saved Him from an 'inferiority complex' which is never a sign of humility. He knew that He had a mission from above. He had a perfect right to stand up among men. He could meet them all, poor and rich, because He knew that God had sent Him. And men recognized that strength in Him. They were conscious of a dignity and a power which was about Him that compelled them to say of Him that He was speaking *"as having authority and not as the scribes"*. He had perfect confidence in what He said and the way He took. The explanation is found on the ground of who He was. *"I am come down from heaven."* It was sonship which gave Him this strength — that wonderful relationship He had with His Father.

Now the spiritual value of that divine sonship is ours. This does not mean that there has to be any pride or conceit. We have to be like He was, meek among men, lowly in heart and unassuming. There has to be no self-assertiveness, yet we must have the strength of the Son of God. We ought never to have anything apologetic about our testimony. We are sons of God. John says: *"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God"*; and we are. It is the affirmation of a fact. *"Now we are the children of God"*. Let us stand upon that fact. What a strength would be ours if we truly recognized the position we have as sons before God through our Lord Jesus Christ! *"The Father loves the Son."* That holds true for all the children of God. Sonship is based upon the Father's special love. *"The Father knows the Son."* We too are known of Him. The world knows us not. It may look at us as a very poor specimen, but it knew Him not. But the Father knows and loves His children. That is our strength.

20 DEC - God Moves in Relation to Sonship

Now sonship is the basis of God's activity. The position and vocation of sonship has nothing to do with an 'official' appointment. God's dealings with us are not on an official ground; it is not because we have taken up some Christian work, or go by a certain name which represents a special office, that God is interested in us. To be ministers or Christian workers does not imply that God is especially working through us. God's dealings with us are based upon our relationship with Him as children of God. He is dealing with us as with sons. It is a spiritual thing not an official matter. Ministry, therefore, results from a special relationship to God. The real work of God depends on our spiritual relationship with Him, and the value of our service is in proportion to our union with God.

Only those who are absolutely one with God can take responsibilities for Him. Whatever we may call ourselves, however great may be our activity for the Lord, God does not take account of that. It is no use coming to Him and saying: "Now Lord, You know that I am engaged in this work, and therefore I want You to help me in this." That is no reason why He should help us. God stands by His children and only works with them on the basis of an inward relationship. Some person who is not in an 'official' position may be far more useful to the Lord than many who have an official ministry and position. What matters is not our spiritual knowledge or official ministry, but our secret relationship with God. God fits us spiritually for His service and upholds our sonship, not our office. He will see to our position if we see to our relationship with Him.

God called Israel His firstborn. He stood by His people on the basis of that sonship. Therefore Israel could take an important and significant position among the nations. It was the chosen vessel of God's testimony in the earth. But the day came when it ceased to go on with God as His firstborn. Its inward relationship to God became merely an outward form and God had to withdraw from His people and send them into captivity. Our position and vocation is in relation to sonship. For that very reason the Lord Jesus put the emphasis upon sonship. He never said that the Father loved the ministry He had come to fulfil on this earth. But He said: "*The Father loves the Son*". Position and vocation have to be based upon sonship. Without sonship they are worthless before God.

21 DEC - The Great Value and Purpose of Being Sons

What is the purpose of sonship? It is to bring us into a place of spiritual responsibility. God never puts responsibilities upon 'official people', but upon sons. Therefore He has to train us as children in order to develop sonship in us, to bring us there where we can take responsibilities for God. He seeks to bring us to a state of spiritual maturity, to full growth. This cannot be done in some Bible school, or by putting people 'into the ministry'. God never works on an official side. Oh yes, God does take us into His school. He can also take us into His school in some training institute. And it is a blessed thing if He does it. But God's school is something very different from mere scholarly activity. His Word says: *"My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reprov'd of Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."* Note this word *"whom He receives"*. The exact meaning in the Greek is not *'receives'*, but *"whom He positions" or places*. It is a matter of position. God is seeking to develop a state in us where He can trust us. When God is dealing with us, there is behind it a wonderful assurance that He is going to put His trust in us. He is bringing us into a position of trust. We do not just want to be servants, bits of a machine, but sons who have become one with the Father, and in whose hands He can put spiritual responsibilities. When we truly recognize this, we begin to understand why God is dealing with us as He does. But because God is in it we know that the end is sure. He will bring His children through.

The fact of His sonship gave to the Lord Jesus perfect assurance as to the ultimate issue and accomplishment of His life. It carried Him far, although He knew that the Cross was immediately ahead, and He was going to be killed. He ministered here for three and a half years, and then all His earthly life came to an end. How did He face it? He regarded it as something to come and to pass, but it made no difference to Him and His relationship to the Father. His sufferings were just a tunnel to go through, and then to come out into the light to go on for all eternity, because He was the Son of God. Death was a mere incident for Him, for His sonship was indestructible, eternal. He knew that His work did not finish on the Cross, but was going on, on the ground of resurrection for all eternity. He was not just living for this little space of time. Thus He derived His strength from the fact of sonship.

22 DEC - The Urgency of His Purpose

So long as we are in line with God's purpose His work can go on in us. What matters is not first of all our activity. God is more concerned with what is done in us than what we do for Him. He often reaches His end with us much better when we are in a state of inactivity than in times of much work. The hand of the Potter was upon Moses when he was in the wilderness where he could not do much. During forty years he was just looking after a few sheep. That is not very grand. No doubt he wondered sometimes to what purpose he was there, whether his life had any value. But principalities and powers saw something and wondered at God's wisdom. God knew how to equip this man, how to get His way in that life. That is true in the case of many a servant of God. God is working for good, He is shaping His vessel. There is wisdom in all His dealings with us. But we have to see to it that we have no plans or personal ambitions of our own. The clay has to be completely in His hands. If we are really here for God, we can be assured that He will reach His end, that He may work out His purpose in us. And there we shall find strength.

Are you sure you are in the great purpose of God? Everybody has some part in it. Paul, when speaking of the church, illustrates it thus: "that all the body is fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplies". No part of the body is without function. Each and every one has to be in God's purpose. Some parts may be very small, they nevertheless are equally important. We have to remember that God has called us for a purpose which will be realised as we abandon ourselves to Him. Whatever it may be to which He has called us, let us be ready and do it. A Holy Spirit possessed life is always marked by purpose. Nothing can be lost in such a life; let us not believe in mere generalities. That is not good enough. There is something far more definite in God's thoughts for our lives.

Let us abandon all personal desires, and be filled with the Spirit of urgency — "straight away". Those who know that they are called of God, and who definitely recognize the purpose of their life, will be wholly given up to it. Such no longer have any interest for the things of this earth. They have no time to lose. They must buy up their time.

23 DEC - The Days of the Plough

At the beginning: "Doth the plowman plow continually to sow?" Well, the answer of common sense is, No, of course he does not! He would be a madman if he ploughed, and then went on ploughing all through the year; if he did nothing else but plough, or harrow his ploughed ground. Does he do that continually? No; it is a job that has got to be done – the breaking up, the turning over, the exposing to the elements, the harrowing – it is an essential operation, but it is not continued indefinitely. It is something to be done, but it has its time and place, its beginning and its end.

The Lord is speaking to His faithful people who are feeling that they are under the plough; furrows are being cut deep into their souls; they are being turned up and turned over, laid bare, exposed, broken, harrowed. The Lord says, even to faithful people: 'This is necessary; we are looking ahead to a harvest, to real values; this is an essential aspect of the work. But... take this comfort: this is not going on forever.' Under the hand of the Lord it is periodic, and it is timed. It comes into the individual life of the child of God; it comes into the life of a company of the Lord's people; and, as history shows, it comes into the experience of the whole Church. From time to time, down through the centuries, it seems that the action of God once more is cutting deep, overturning, breaking up. It is the hard way toward some fresh harvest. But the word of the Lord is: 'My dear people, remember this: I am the Man with His hand on the plough: I have this whole thing in hand, it will not go on forever.' It is something necessary – everybody will agree with it in nature; we agree with it, surely, in grace but it has its time limit; and when that phase is accomplished, the Lord terminates it, and says: Now, that is done and we can get on with the next thing.

24 DEC - Our Defense against the World

The altar was the great defensive against the enemy. If you look in the Book of Ezra in chapter three, at verse three, you have this: *"so they set up the altar on its foundation, for they were terrified because of the peoples of the lands..."* Because fear of the peoples of the lands was upon them, they put the altar in its place. The Cross is a great defensive; the Cross defends us from the world. The world is the great enemy of the Church. The spirit of the world has always been the Church's great enemy. Satan has always tried to get the world into the Church and so wreck the Church and its ministry, to destroy the influence of the Church in the world.

It is a very clever and subtle move of the enemy to destroy the influence of the Church in the world by bringing the world into the Church. For Paul said, *"God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"* (Gal 6:14).

A truly crucified people are never in danger of the world. It is only when the Cross has not done its work that the world has a place. The world has no place with a crucified man or woman, or a crucified company of believers. **IF YOU WANT TO KEEP THE WORLD OUT, PUT THE CROSS IN ITS PLACE.** If the Cross is truly in its place in fullness, then everything else will come into order. **THE CROSS** is the great defensive against the world. **THE CROSS** is the great defensive against evil powers. **THE CROSS** makes everything safe; it makes everything safe for the Lord.

You see, the Lord wants to commit Himself. He wants to trust Himself to His people, but if the Cross is not there at work, the Lord cannot trust Himself to them. The Lord says, "It is not safe for Me to give Myself there, or I should be involved in their un-crucified condition." The Cross makes everything safe for the Lord, and the Cross makes everything safe for the Church. If the Cross is really at work in all of us, we can trust one another. It is quite safe to trust yourself to a crucified man or woman. **THE CROSS GOVERNS EVERYTHING.**

25 DEC - The Subjective Apprehension of Salvation

The subjective side of God's work demands for its effective outworking that we are settled once and for all as to our salvation; that comes first! If you have only the one side, the objective, and all your emphasis is upon that, you may be shallow and you may not grow spiritually. If you dwell only on the subjective, you become introspective and begin to doubt your salvation; your eyes are always turned in upon yourself, and the result is that you begin to look for something in yourself that can commend itself to God; and therein lies a denial of the perfect work of salvation accomplished by the Lord Jesus. You see it is an undermining and undercutting of the whole of the work of Calvary. These two things must go together. On the one hand - fully and finally *in Christ* we are as perfect in the hour when we believe as ever we shall be. On the other hand - all that is *in Christ* is going to be made, not THEORETICALLY true, but ACTUALLY true in us by the Holy Spirit. But the second demands the first, and we must keep the balance. We must rejoice always in the fact that our names are written in heaven, that we are saved with a perfect salvation; but, on the other hand, we must remember that there is something that the Lord wants to do - not to make salvation true, but to make the image of Christ an inward thing. That is the outworking of salvation.

So this balance is necessary, and we must give equal emphasis. If we over-emphasize the **subjective** we take something from the glory of Christ. If we over-emphasize the **objective** we take something from God's purpose. It is a *matter of the work of God in Christ, and the purpose of God in Christ*: and these two things must both have their place.

May the Lord give us understanding, so that we come into a place of rest and are delivered from the perils which lurk in the vicinity of every Divine blessing.

26 DEC - Life Is At the Center of Everything

Eternal life governs the history and destiny of humanity. Without that eternal life, there is no hope; humanity is in a hopeless position. The destiny of those without this gift of God is a very hopeless thing, for it is eternal death. That does not mean annihilation, nor extinction, but it does mean eternal separation from God; and if you want to know what that means, look at the Lord Jesus in the last moments on the cross and hear Him cry: *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*! But this other side, eternal life, is the basis of eternal hope, so it is just exactly the opposite. Thus eternal life is the governing factor in history and in destiny.

That is indicated in two ways in the Bible. In the beginning it is indicated in the tree of life in the Garden; at the end it is indicated in the tree fully grown in the city – the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God.

As to that tree in the Garden at the beginning (and, of course, it is only a figure, or type), it is the centre of life, so God indicates that this thing called life is at the centre of everything. Life is centred in that tree representatively, and you notice how very jealous God is about that tree. He is so jealous that, when man sinned against it, He set a wall of fire around it, and took every precaution against man touching it. He said: *"Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life"*, and put a cherubim there with a flaming sword. It would be a very dangerous thing to touch that unless man was in full fellowship with God! God is very jealous over this matter of eternal life! That tree, symbolically, is a test of man's relationship with God. It is a challenge to man as to his relationship with God, or, in other words, as to whether he is in right standing with God. The whole issue hung upon man's fidelity to God, for that was the test. You see, man was put on probation. This life was to be given on one condition only: was man going to be faithful to God, or not?

That tree is a type of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, for He is the tree of life, and our attitude towards the Lord Jesus is going to determine our destiny – whether we have eternal life or eternal death.

27 DEC - True and False Life

In the Garden Satan appealed to *Adam's feelings, and, pointing to the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he said: 'You see how lovely and full of juice that fruit is! How much it is to be desired!' So Adam looked at the fruit and said: 'How lovely! I think I would like some of that.' His emotions went out to it, and when Satan has got your mind and your emotions, it is not far to your will! The next thing was that Adam took the fruit. He used his will, and the damage was done.

It is all symbolic, but, you see, it contains eternal principles. The whole kingdom and reign of Satan are built upon that basis. The mind, the heart and the will of humanity are captured by the devil, but it is false life. What about all the emotion in the world, even in Christianity? There is a vast difference between spiritual, eternal life, and soul life. There is such a thing as false life, and that thing is the master-stroke of Satan! You will remember that there was a time in the history of Israel in the wilderness when certain sons of Aaron brought false fire and offered it upon God's altar. You know what happened! You know all about God's jealousy. There is a vast amount of false fire in this world today. It looks like true life, true fire, what is of God, but there is a lie in it, and the fruit of that tree is bitter fruit in the end.

How can we discern the difference between the true life and the false life? Well, I think John is the great messenger of this, because his writings were particularly in this connection. He wrote in a time when everything in Christianity was being falsified. There was Christ and anti-Christ. In fact, there were many antichrists, for many false spirits had gone abroad. It was a time when Christians were being deceived, and John, writing for that time, said: *"The anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you"* (1 John 2:27). In effect, John was saying: 'By the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of the true life, you will be able to discern between the true and the false.' Even when they look so much alike, the Spirit in you will say: 'There is something not true about this!'

I think that one of the things that indicate whether it is true or false is whether man made it or not. You see, those sons of Aaron made their incense, and they did not make it of the same ingredients as those with which the true incense was made. It was something which looked like the true, but it was false, and the Spirit of God knew the difference. We have to be very careful that we do not create false fire, for that is the danger of strong personalities.

* *Satan tempted Eve, but God held Adam directly accountable for their sin. Ed*

28 DEC - The Bondslave of the Lord

What is service? What is the meaning of being the servant of God? Can you put your finger upon it? Go to Mary again. What is the law? To bring God back into His world, and that is the only service of God. Service is comprehended in that one thing – making a place for God, bringing God back into His right place, seeing that He is not excluded from His world. The presence of God is the great law of everything in service. Mary brought God back into this world, so she was "highly graced", supremely honoured. It was not just an angel or a little cherub that was sent to her, but the archangel Gabriel was sent from God to this woman Mary, because she was to be the vessel and the channel of bringing God back into this world. Is that not tremendous? Is Mary redeemed now? Has she got a new place? But it is not Mary herself. It is Mary as the bondservant of God. And it is not what we are in ourselves, but just a matter of how much of God is brought back to this world by our being here.

There is a link between that which happened in heaven with the Son of God when He emptied Himself, and Mary. Do not make any mistake! Mary had to make a great renunciation, for she knew what it meant to have a child without a husband. Is that not the deepest shame that a woman can know? Does that not mean that she has sacrificed all that is noble and honourable about womanhood? Supposing it became known that this child was born and Joseph was not the father! Who was the father, then? That is something for people to talk about! I am not sure that the people in wicked Nazareth had not already spread a rumour, because at one time some of the enemies of Jesus Christ threw this thing at Him, when they said: "*We were not born in iniquity*" (John 8:41). Is that not horrible, terrible? Ah, Mary knew what it meant! She knew that if this thing got out into the world she would be counted as one of the world's most disgraceful people. Everyone would look down upon her. She was afraid, and, more than that, "*greatly troubled*".

The angel Gabriel read what was going on in her soul and said: "*Fear not, Mary.*" Never in all history did a woman need that word more than Mary did that day! The angel Gabriel said: 'Mary, you are a very specially favoured woman. God has favoured you more than other women.' and she said – note! – "*Behold, the **bondslave** of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*" I put a mighty emphasis upon that word '*bondslave*'! Did Mary empty herself of a woman's glory? That is what it meant naturally. Did Mary humble herself to be obedient unto death? For, you know, a woman like that would have been stoned in Israel, and she knew it. Did she humble herself and become obedient unto death? Oh, yes, she did. She went down to the lowest place. But what is the word? "*Bondslave of the Lord*" - the servant of God.

29 DEC - The Knowing of Christ

Everything related to the great destiny for which man was created is bound up inseparably with the knowledge of Christ. You have tremendous things there: the greatness of the destiny for which man was created – and the Bible has a very great deal to say about that. That destiny, that great Divine purpose in creation, demands for its realization the knowledge of Jesus Christ; it is bound up with the knowledge of God's Son. Within that compass of Divine purpose we have man's creation, man's redemption and salvation, man's transformation, man's glorification, and then man's eternal vocation. None of it is possible without knowing Him.

We look at a little child from the day that it comes into this world, and the one thing the parents are watching for continually, and waiting for, is the sign of intelligence. For the normal development of a human life is marked by growing intelligence, that is, in the first place, the ability to identify objects. It is very simple, but very real, when, first of all, the parent is able to recognize that the child knows him or her – the child identifies. And so its development of its very life is marked by this growing intelligence, this ability to identify objects, and then to interpret and grasp their meaning. It comes so slowly, and yet it is there. To apply those recognized, identified objects to practical value, to turn them to account, to know that they mean this, and that they are meant for this or that; the application of their intelligence to practical needs or situations – I say these are the indications of normal development and it is along the line of growing intelligence.

If that is true in the natural, it is equally true in the spiritual. The mark of spiritual growth, the growth of the spiritual life, is this power to recognize the meaning of Christ; to identify Him in things; to interpret Him – the power to interpret Him and to explain Him; and then to apply Him to practical situations, our own and others. That is, 'knowing' the Lord. And I say again, that is the way of spiritual growth to full manhood, to the fulfilment of the ultimate vocation. And let it be recognized at once that what is true in the natural is true in the spiritual in this sense – God created man with an object. A life has missed its way and purpose if it fulfils no vocation and if it becomes an end in itself. Vocation is the object, the end, of all life and all development. That is true in the spiritual life. The Bible reveals progress toward eternal vocation, and essentially along the line of spiritual intelligence, or the knowing of Christ.

30 DEC - Our Glory Lies in Knowing Christ

God has placed supreme importance upon *knowing Him*. Hear His Word: *'Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me.'* Above all other things in which men do or may glory, God puts this, with His tremendous emphasis: Thus saith the Lord. The supreme thing with Him is to understand and to know Him.

We have read how the Lord Jesus put this matter in relation to the most vital thing, even that of eternal life, and there is no more vital thing than that. In one sense eternal life is the key to the Bible. *"And this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, Jesus Christ"* (John 17:3). Life eternal, with the Lord Jesus, is placed upon this basis of knowing Him. That man Paul, Paul the aged, with a long life of learning Christ, and of perhaps incomparable revelation of Jesus Christ, is now standing at the gate of eternity and crying: *"... that I may know Him ..."*. You might say that that was the cry with which Paul entered into heaven. And alongside of that, you remember, he said: *"I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"* (Philippians 3:8). Not to be learning, dear friends, is to stop growing, for growing is along that line.

The knowledge of Christ is the beginning of salvation; the knowledge of Christ is the whole meaning of the Christian life; the knowledge of Christ is God's motive in all discipline and training. All the dealings of God with us have but this one thing in view: our education as to Christ, the knowledge of Christ. The very essence of glory will be the knowledge of Christ. Perhaps that sounds a strange word, but it is not so difficult to understand. When at last we see in Him the answer to all our questions and our problems, and He becomes the answer to every cry of our need and heart, we see Him as He is, and He fills all the vacuum of our longing, that will be glory. It is so now in the smallest ways, is it not? If, after a very difficult time when we have been brought through deep and terrible suffering, we have our eyes open to see something of Christ that meets our need, that is glory! He becomes our glory. Glory is not just something of an external, shining radiance - it is a state of heart, it is full satisfaction, full gratification, and possession of a full explanation and understanding. That will be wonderful! So the knowledge of Christ will be the very essence of glory.

31 DEC - The Divine Order in Christ

In the light of the situation in the world, and in the Church, and churches, I have been very greatly exercised about one thing. I have put it aside as being too difficult, but I am compelled to face it. It is concerning Divine order. Of all the ways in which Christ is to be known unto life and unto growth, there is one way in the Word of God which, we might be tempted to say, is supremely important - though we could say that of every way in which He is to be known. However, that one way is this: To rightly understand Christ is to see that He relates to a heavenly and eternal order of things.

That word 'order' lies right at the back of everything in the Bible. Everything that the Bible has to say to us is related to an eternal order that God intended to obtain in this universe. And His key to that order, without which nothing of all His glorious purpose is possible, is Christ. The Person of Christ is the very embodiment of all the principles of a universal order. If we could comprehend, discern, understand and know Christ, we should see that in that one universal Person are gathered up all the laws of a great heavenly order.

We are told that *'in Him, through Him, by Him, and unto Him were all things created'*. His creative activity at work is marked by a marvellous order, and we shall say more about this as we go on. Creation, as it comes from His hand, as it is projected by Him, is a marvellous system of co-ordinated forces and objects in a wonderful relatedness and harmony. Everything is in its own place, everything is in its own time and everything has its own function. And so you could go on, but, I repeat, we will come back to it.

His redemptive work, the whole of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus has this one thing in mind: the recovery of a lost order. He stands in His Person, in His creative work, and in His redemptive work, related to this whole matter of an eternal, heavenly order.

God is a God of order. But there is a personal evil intelligence in this universe who is God's arch-enemy and, as such, is the instigator of all disorder. He is called *"the god of this world"* (or age) and *"the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"*. The hall-mark of all satanic rule and influence is disorder. That rule is rapidly moving to its fullness and final judgment.