

The Lamb in the Midst of the Throne

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Chapter 1 - The Lamb

Reading: Exodus 12:1-11.

"And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain..." (Rev. 5:2).

"The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. 7:17).

"The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne..." That designation of the Lord Jesus is a very frequently occurring one in the book of the Revelation, as we know. It occurs some twenty-eight times. I think it might be helpful by way of laying a foundation if we hurriedly passed our eye over the book in that connection.

In chapter 5 it occurs four times. Here we have the Lord Jesus as the Lamb slain, in exaltation in the midst of the throne, then as the centre of worship, and then as the One who is worthy to judge. There is a book sealed, and no one is found, not even in heaven, worthy to take the book and open it. Something more than the very purity of angels and archangels is required, some features, some elements, which an archangel does not possess are necessary for this, and there is weeping that no one is found worthy to unseal the book. The Lamb is introduced as possessing the qualities which give Him the right to open the book and the seals thereof. It is the book of judgments, the judgment of the world, and only the Lamb has the right, by reason of qualification, to undertake the judgment of the world. That is the first thing here.

In chapter 6 the title occurs twice. The book is opened and the judgment begins and here the wrath of the Lamb is referred to.

In chapter 7 we have the word four times again, in connection with the great multitude which no man can number who have come up out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, and they are before the throne of the Lamb.

Then we have to go right to chapter 12 for the next reference, a very familiar one. The title is only once mentioned here, in connection with the overcomer company who are said to overcome the dragon because of the Blood of the Lamb.

In chapter 13 it occurs once more. Here all worship the beast except those whose names are written in the book of life of the Lamb.

Then the sixth occurrence is in chapter 14, which contains the title four times. The Lamb appears on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand.

In chapter 15 mention is made once more of those who are victorious from the beast, and they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb.

In chapter 17 ten kings give their power and authority to the beast and make war against the Lamb.

In chapter 19 we have the title twice used, with reference to the marriage of the Lamb.

In chapter 21 it occurs five times: firstly, we have the Lamb's wife, secondly, the twelve apostles of the Lamb, thirdly, the Lamb is the temple, fourthly, the Lamb is the light of the city, and fifthly, the Lamb's book of life.

Then finally, in chapter 22 there are two mentions of the Lamb. The river of water of life proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and then the definite phrase, "the throne of God and of the Lamb".

The Significance of the Title

Now, that is something more than a summary of Scripture references. That gives a foundation, as I have said, for tremendously significant reflection and leads us at once to ask, "What is the significance of this designation, the Lamb?"

The simplest contemplation would surely lead us to feel how strange it all is, how peculiar. All these tremendous things, the greatest things of which we can conceive, covering a vast range and reaching from the centre to the circumference of God's universe, all focused in One who is given the title of "the Lamb"?

Well, what is the significance of this term? As I see it, there are two outstanding characteristics of the Lamb which is chosen by God. One is purity and the other is unquestioning yieldedness to God's will. That sounds very simple, but it goes to the heart of everything. Purity and unquestioning yieldedness to God's will. These are really one thing in essence. The yieldedness indicates the absence of every element of self-will, of self-direction, of self-determination, of self-reasoning, of self-mindedness, or self-interest, and I understand that to be the meaning of *"a lamb without spot or blemish."* The spots and blemishes, what are they? Well, they would constitute some aspect of a self-life, some element of selfhood, and this Lamb is without any such elements or features. God, who sees to the inward parts in His Lamb, sees no trace of the principle of self, that self-principle which arose through Satan's interference in Adam, the utter destruction of which, and the riddance of which, is essential to secure that primal state of absolute pleasure to God. Yieldedness, unquestioning yieldedness to God's will, is the utter ruling out of all self-elements. Spotlessness and being without blemish is that, and that too is purity. That purity of heart which sees God is singleness of eye to the will of God. The pure in heart shall see God. What is it to be pure in heart? It is to have no other interest in the universe and in life but the will of God, a single eye to the glory of God, that is purity of heart. The Lamb is to be without blemish, the blemish of a will that cuts across the will of God, and therefore the Lamb is marked by utter yieldedness to that will — *"As a lamb that is led to the slaughter..."*. You know, and already your minds are drawing upon the scriptures which bear this out. If Isaac is a type of the Lamb, if, in connection with the offering of Isaac his father says, *"My son, God will provide Himself a lamb,"* then Isaac is the embodiment of this unquestioning yieldedness to the will of the Father: and so you find it throughout the Word.

The Blood of the Lamb — the Essential Life-energy of Incorruptibility

Now, the Blood of the Lamb, the very life energy of this Lamb, is this incorruptible nature, this nature which, under no provocation or trial or temptation, can be brought to project a self-interest as in the place of the Father's will. The whole life of the Lord Jesus is gathered up in that one thing. From the day when He was introduced publicly as the Lamb of God, there was an almost immediate conspiracy of hell to blemish that Lamb, and it was all along this one line of seeking to bring up some self-interest, self-preservation, self-consideration, self-sympathy, self-pity, self-ambition, self-realization, all the thousand ways in which self can work. Right to the end and in the dire hour of His final anguish, the temptation still goes on. "Come down and we will believe!" Behind that suggestion, with all the fierceness of the fire, is again the endeavour to introduce some action of a "self" character for self-deliverance. But no! "I come to do thy will", and the will of God, and the will of man, of the flesh, can never go hand in hand. The Blood of the Lamb is the essential life-energy of incorruptibility. It cannot be corrupted. Hell has exhausted its last evil resource to corrupt the Lamb, and has failed. The Lamb is triumphant, the Lamb has overcome, the Lamb is in the midst of the throne.

The Book of Revelation in the Light of the Lamb

You see how this throws light upon everything in the book of Revelation. Everything is taken up in relation to the Lamb, and you have to see everything, therefore, in that book, as everywhere else, in the light of this nature, this incorruptible nature, or in the light of this One whose nature this is.

(a) The Judgment of this World

Chapter 5 then must be seen in the light of the Lamb. Who has a right to pass judgment, who has the right to bring judgment upon another, or upon a world? Only He whose moral quality is above reproach, only He who through every testing, has proved Himself more than a match for the effort to corrupt Him. The judgment is in the hands of One who is uncorruptible and incorruptible, and it is His moral value, not His official appointment, which gives Him the throne. "Thou art worthy", that is the point. "Thou art worthy", not because Thou art the Son of God, but because Thou art the Lamb of God. "Thou art worthy to take the book." Beloved, all judgment is upon that foundation, that basis of judgment, and that is the blessedness of the truth that those who, by faith, have taken sides with the Lamb, have come and appropriated all the virtues of His precious Blood by faith, those who are joined to the Lamb, have their judgment already passed, their judgment is past, their sins have gone to judgment beforehand. There is no judgment because there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The judgment of the world is in view in chapter 5. The pouring forth of the vials of judgment, five terrible judgments, and then the sixth which is worse than all the five which have preceded, all is on the ground of this, that there is a righteousness which has been available to men by which they could escape judgment, but having rejected which, there is no escape. Well, it is according to the Lamb.

(b) The Justified

Then we have the great multitude which no man can number standing before the throne of God and the Lamb, having come up out of great tribulation and having washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. It simply means this, that they, both as to position and as to state, have by faith been united with the Lamb. Position? Yes, but they have also washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. What have they done? They have accepted Him as their righteousness, as their holiness, as their "spirit's spotless heavenly dress." But they also have repudiated a self-life, a life of self-interest, self-realization, self-direction, and in great tribulation, having refused to seek their own salvation, have stood with the Lamb against themselves and their own interests. They serve Him day and night in His temple.

(c) The Overcomer

The overcomer: he too wins through to this position because of the Blood of the Lamb. Oh yes, you and I have to learn much more and ever more about this mighty power of His Blood as the energy, the vital energy, of Christ against that ground which Satan works upon to get us actuated by the flesh interests, the self-interests, the old creation considerations, and beloved, the test for the overcomer will always be on this one point. Will you, under any kind of pressure, testing, trial, suffering, adversity, will you forsake the way of the Lamb, the will of God, the selfless abandonment to God's glory, in consideration for your own skin? You see, the two sides are perfectly clear. Their own lives — the way of the Lamb: and the way of the overcomer is the way of the Lamb, the way of the Blood of the Lamb, the energy of Christ against the energy of self. Of course, that can be enlarged upon very greatly, but it is a principle indicated.

(d) The Beast

The beast: and when you have said all that you can say about the beast, what does it amount to? Whether he is a political beast or a religious beast or whatever he is in prophecy, that is of secondary consideration. The primary thing is, what is he morally? The

beast, in that sense, is simply the personification and the embodiment of all that is contrary to the Lamb, and he makes war with the Lamb, and remember, it is the Lamb still. It does not say that he makes war with the Son of God. He does not, in the language of the Scriptures, make war with Jesus Christ. He makes war with the Lamb. Keep the Lamb features in view and you have the key to everything.

What is this Lamb's significance? It is this purity, it is the absence, the total absence, of all flesh, self-interest, in utter abandonment that God's will and God's glory should be realized, and the beast is the sum total of all that is contrary to that Lamb, and the beast opposes the Lamb principle, and we know it. We need not begin to look abroad somewhere in Russia for the beast. He is not far from any one of us. Of course I know this means more than that, but what is the beast here? Only the accumulation, the aggregate, of what you are. It is the coming out in full force and manifestation, in embodiment, of this thing that is in the old creation, that is opposed to the will of God, opposed to that utter purity of selfless abandonment to God. The beast is the corrupt, the impure, the evil. He makes war upon the Lamb. Blessed be God, the Lamb overcomes, and there are those who are with the Lamb who also overcome with Him, and they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. They have escaped the beast — a great reflection upon the spiritual thought of God concerning Israel. We will see more about that again.

(e) The Marriage of the Lamb

The marriage of the Lamb. What a contemplation! Here if anywhere we need adjustment of our thoughts. The Lamb, being what He is, will never marry anyone not after His own kind. The Lamb will only have a wife like Himself. There is another woman here, a mother of harlots. He will not marry her. He is marrying a wife, and this wife has made herself ready. "He that hath this hope (John is but expressing it in other words) in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure". The marriage of the Lamb means that there is a company conformed to His image who can be brought into this relationship with Him. It is a union of those who are one in every respect. There never was a marriage like this, so truly one. It is the marriage between the Lamb and those who have followed the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, that is, those who have gone the Lamb way, the way of selfless, unquestioning yieldedness to the will of God. That is the marriage, that is the wife of the Lamb. Similarly, we have to see these other things in the same light.

(f) The Throne of the Lamb

There is the throne of the Lamb. The Lamb is exalted and elevated and given the high place because of what He is, and that throws a light back on words which have gone before — "... *shall sit with me in my throne.*" Yes, the throne is the throne of the Lamb. How shall we come to exaltation with Him, to reign with Him, to share the throne with Him? What is the foundation of reigning life? What is the very essence of throne life? Unquestioning yieldedness, unreserved selflessness. That is not the way in which the great of this world have got their place of power. Their way is by self-assertiveness, every form of self. It is what we are seeing today. But their thrones and crowns will perish. This throne is forever and ever! It is the moral quality of this throne which gives it its endurance.

(g) The Temple and Light of the City

The Lamb is the temple. What is a temple for? The temple is a place where you have fellowship with God, where God meets with you and speaks with you. The temple is the place of access to God, the place of an open heaven, the place of fellowship with the Lord. What is it that constitutes the temple, what is it that constitutes this fellowship with God, this open heaven, this meeting with God, this speaking of God? What is it? It is the Lamb. It is a certain kind of nature, disposition. It is not a place, it is a state, an attitude, a condition of heart. "To this man will I look ..." That is the temple. No ornate building can secure that,

and no miserable dungeon can exclude that. If we are one with the Lamb, we are in the temple of God. The Lamb is the temple, and the Lamb too is the light of the city.

(h) The River of Water of Life and the Lamb's Book of Life

The river of water of life proceeds from the throne of the Lamb. The river, then, has its spring in what the Lamb is, and so also the Lamb's book of life. What is it to have our names written in the Lamb's book of life? It is not to have something inscribed. God does not have to do that sort of thing in heaven. If He were doing that, He would have to keep a good many angelic scribes very busy! That is not the way. There is something spiritually inscribed, inscribed in moral and spiritual terms, something settled, something established of relationship with God in the Lamb. If we have ever known what it is in a very little way to have our vitality sapped, drawn out of us, we do not forget it. That cost us something, and we ever remember that the securing of that cost something of our very life, our blood, we say, went out into that. It cost us life. When the Lord Jesus imparts His life to a believing heart, when the faith of a believer in all need and desperation draws that precious virtue from Him, it is a part of Himself going out. He has given something of Himself, and that to which He gives Himself is one with Himself, part of Himself. It possesses His very life, as of His very Blood. That is not forgotten. To eternity, that is not forgotten. That is inscribed in spiritual terms in an unforgettable way. The very life of the Lamb has gone out. The Lamb's book of life is something like that. It is a book of life, not a book of paper, but a book of life. You cannot describe a book of life. It is a volume of life in which we have a part, inscribed because we have the life. All who have that life are inscribed in that book. They have received their registration there. Well, you see, it is all in terms of the Lamb. In every connection, the significance of this term "the Lamb" has to be seen.

The Security of the Eternal Purpose is a Lamb

Again, in a word, all these things mean that God's end is reached, God's purpose is accomplished, God's ways are taken, on the basis of this Lamb-like nature, which, on one side, is purity, and, on the other side, is unquestioning yieldedness to the will of God, and that is said to be the mightiest thing of which men know. The cry in response to the weeping was, *"Weep not, behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah... hath overcome to open the book."* And I turned to see this mighty, mighty king of beasts, this triumphant monarch, the Lion of the tribe of Judah — and, behold, *"a Lamb... as though it had been slain."* God speaks to our hearts of might, of power, of exaltation, of overcoming, in terms of purity of heart, and purity of heart, from God's standpoint, is singleness of eye to His glory, which, in other words, is the absence of self with all that we know that to mean in the old race of Adam. This is but the foundation. We are going to stop there for the present.

But I do trust that this is going to give some fresh meaning and value to everything in our relationship with the Lord, that it is going to provoke in us something deeper when we say, *"Worthy is the Lamb!"* It is going to make far more glorious and wonderful to us the foundation of our faith. How utterly other we are! This Lamb is not so. We are not this Lamb by nature and disposition. There is everything in us, if only it is provoked, which is the opposite of the Lamb, and yet, beloved, the place that the Lamb occupies can be occupied by us, even the throne! All that the Lamb means can be made good in us: the river, the light, the temple, and even the bride, and all through faith in the Blood of the Lamb. The Lamb has overcome, prevailed, His Blood has triumphed, and you and I, by faith in that Blood, can overcome, can triumph, can prevail, and can come and abide forever in the immediate presence of God who cannot look upon iniquity. We contemplate ourselves with the utmost loathing, and yet, because of the Blood of the Lamb, we can be where He is on the same terms, that is, abiding in the eternal burnings before the eyes of One who cannot behold iniquity, who cannot look upon sin. We will only overcome as we grasp that, as we believe, as we stand there. Remember we have to take the place of the Lamb. In other

words, we have to come to the Cross, and self-strength, self-will, self-reason, and all that is of self has to be broken at the Cross. The glory of God has to be enthroned in our hearts as the one supreme object of a single-eyed yieldedness. He must reign in His will, if we would reign in His glory. Well, may this spur us to worship of the Lamb!

Chapter 2 - God's Paschal Lamb

"On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.'" (John 1:29)

"And he looketh upon Jesus as he walked, and saith, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'" (John 1:36)

You will note two things with regard to these passages. The one is that they are connected with the commencement of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. The other is that they are connected with the Passover. In John 2:13 we read, *"And the Passover of the Jews was at hand ..."* and again, v. 23, *"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover ..."* and it is a matter of great significance that the entire life of the Lord Jesus was so closely, at every special stage, connected with the Passover.

The Life of the Lord Jesus in its Connection with the Passover

It is not generally known that there is the greatest probability that the birth of the Lord Jesus took place round about the time of the Passover, and that was in the spring of the year. It is very doubtful, to begin with, whether the shepherds could have been watching over sheep in the fields of Bethlehem in the month of December by night. And then further there is the fact that the twenty-fifth day of December was only fixed for the celebration of the birth of Christ in the year 350 A.D. There was a great heathen festival which fell on that date in Rome and the Roman Church wished to override those heathen practices, and the Roman Church decided that on that very day, the twenty-fifth day of December, they would celebrate the birth of Christ. Thus the twenty-fifth of December became a day of High Mass for the celebration of Christ's birth, and took the name of *Christ-Mass*. It was not the date of the birth of Christ, but purely a Roman procedure to overcome some abominable heathen festival. The greatest probability is that Christ was born about the month of April and at the time of the Passover. As we go on we shall see things which seem very clearly to bear that out.

From that point nothing is known or recorded for twelve years, and, at the age of twelve, He went up to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover. That is the next mention. Nothing more is on record until He begins to be about thirty years of age, and that brings us to what we have here in John 1, namely, His coming out to take up His public ministry, and it is connected with the feast of the Passover.

There are other feasts of the Passover referred to in John's Gospel and we come at length to the close of His ministry, and Luke records it in these words, *"With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer ..."* His death, as we know so well, took place at the time of the Passover. Thus, although it cannot be proved that He was born at that time, it does seem that, whether that be true or not, His life was very closely associated in its major movements with this feast, and that gives very great significance to this word, *"Behold, the Lamb of God!"* That term bounds His life from birth to death, and then that life, that full-orbed life, in all its significance is taken up into the throne. All the value of the Lamb life, the Lamb ministry, and the Lamb death is seated in the throne.

Behold the Lamb of God!

Behold, the Lamb of God! We have said that He took up His ministry in connection with the Passover and therefore all these people who had come up to Jerusalem from near and far to the feast well understood what John meant. The very atmosphere was full of the idea of the lamb, the paschal lamb. Everybody was thinking in terms of the paschal lamb. They had been, and were being, occupied with the ritual of the lamb, its selection from the flock, its examination by the expert, its being held up in the fields of Bethlehem for four days under observation, and then its being brought to the temple and slain, and then taken home and eaten. All this was going on. and right in the midst of it all, timed by God out of eternity when everybody was thinking of a lamb, this cry is heard, *Behold, God's Lamb!*

The rainy season was over and had done its work. The torrents in the land destroyed the lanes, carried away the bridges and made travel exceedingly difficult. Thus it had been the practice for many years that, before the Passover, bands of men should be sent out into the country to clear the roads and repair the bridges for the people to come up to Jerusalem to the Passover. It is in connection with that practice that the prophet Isaiah sounded forth his prophetic word about John the Baptist. *"The voice of one that crieth in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God...'"* And again, *"Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones."* You see John the Baptist preparing the way of the Lord and then pointing to the Lamb, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is God's Lamb, not Israel's lamb by Israel's choice, but God's Lamb, and when you look into the Divine, heavenly, eternal connection, you find that God chose His Lamb before the foundation of the world. So we have in Rev. 8:8, *"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* God chose His Lamb before the world was. God anticipated everything in the selection of His Lamb.

Then John tells us in chapter 6 of his Gospel that God sealed His Lamb. *"Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed."* When the Jews selected their lamb from the flock, the average Jew being no expert in the maladies common to lambs, the authorities appointed certain specially qualified men who knew all the maladies to which sheep and lambs were prone to undertake their examination. I believe that the rabbis said there were no fewer than seventy possible blemishes. Thus, after the head of the Jewish household had selected a lamb from the flock, he would take it to one of the experts and pay him a small fee to go over it and make sure that it was sound, flawless, and under expert eyes the lamb would pass through this investigation, and if it was found free from all stain or blemish or spot or malady, the expert put his seal upon it. It was sealed. Then for the four days it was taken into the field with the other sealed lambs to await the Passover. It is to that the Lord Jesus refers. *"Him the Father, even God, hath sealed."* (I want you to get all these points because they are all coming to bear upon very important applications.) God chose His Lamb, and God sealed His Lamb as having passed His expert eye. Never was there Jewish expert whose eye was so clear and piercing and expert as the eye of God. Nothing can be hidden from Him, all things are naked and bare before His eyes. Thus God looked upon His Lamb and sealed Him as having passed His judgment as flawless, perfect. And John says, *Behold, God's Lamb: Him hath the Father sealed!* You see the point. If this One is God's Lamb, then this One is utterly sinless, flawless, without blemish or spot. He is sealed of God.

Then He was put under observation even after that. He was kept up from the tenth day to the fourteenth day. He was kept up over a whole period of four days. Four is the number of creation, and here is the testing of Him as the true representation of the new creation, under testing until the Passover, and no flaw developed in Him. Of course, I am not staying with all the details. It is not necessary. Those sheep about which we sing, and those shepherds, what are they? It is most likely that those shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem were watching over these Passover lambs.

Then the lamb was brought and the lamb was slain. And in the deepest truth, as we know, no man slew the Lord Jesus. God slew Him. God slew His own Lamb. *"Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin."* He was God's Lamb, chosen, sealed, attested, proved, offered.

The Issue of Life

Now, all this has something to say to us, and it is particularly in one connection. The connection is pre-eminently with life. That is the issue in the whole matter. We are brought back, therefore, to the first Passover of which we read in the twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus. There we find the whole world, as represented by Egypt, lying under judgment, and we need to have an adequate insight into and understanding of the matter. Why this progressiveness of judgment? Why this filling up of the cup of iniquity? Why this reaching of the point where judgment overflows? Why? Well, the answer is found in the repeated challenge, *"Let my son go. Israel is my son. my firstborn: Let my son go."* The challenge of God through His servants Moses and Aaron was really this one challenge all through. All this judgment, then, is related to the refusal of the world to fall into line with God's purpose. God's purpose is a people in relation with Himself in terms of sonship, out in freedom, out in spiritual prosperity, out in ascendancy, victory, fullness, life, a people for Himself, constituted according to His own mind. That is God's purpose. The refusal to accept God's purpose and to come into line with it is the ground of judgment. Always remember that. Thus we find, in type, the whole world lying under judgment for that very reason, and this is all gathered up in the firstborn, for at last everything is fulfilled in the firstborn.

The firstborn represents two things. In the first place, the firstborn is always the delight of the father. In the firstborn all the father's pleasure is centered. The father has his life bound up with his firstborn. That is what we find in the Word of God.

Then of course, the firstborn is representative of all the rest of the family, and so the question of judgment, deliverance, death and life, is focused in the firstborn, the firstborn of Egypt and the firstborn of Israel. It is deliverance from death as the issue of judgment. Deliverance from death is the supreme factor in the whole matter, and here the lamb is brought in. The only ground of deliverance from judgment and death is the lamb. The lamb is going to determine this whole matter of who dies and who lives, who falls under judgment and who triumphs through judgment, who is a victim to the power of death and who is triumphant over death. The lamb will determine who goes down into destruction and who goes up into reigning. The lamb determines that. The whole issue in every connection is bound up with the lamb, and that lamb slain speaks of judgment, of the judgment of God having been borne, and borne for all who will take the lamb in faith as their deliverance from judgment. That is simple Gospel fact as we know, and it is fundamental to everything.

The Blood and the Flesh of the Lamb

But there are two sides to this lamb. There is the flesh and there is the blood. The blood of the lamb being poured out has to be sprinkled on the side posts and on the lintels. That blood of a lamb without spot, without blemish, testifies to something. It testifies to the fact that God's righteousness has been fully satisfied. It is an incorruptible life, it is a sinless nature, it is a life without spot or blemish or any such thing. It satisfies God. His eye has rested upon it. It has been tested and proved and God can accept it and God is satisfied with it. God's righteousness is satisfied. That is the significance of the blood. The mighty testimony of the blood is there, beloved, and you and I, no matter how long we remain the Lord's people and how far we go on with the Lord, can never afford to get away from that one hair-breadth. We shall need that as much in the last moment of our sojourn here on earth as we needed it when we came to the Lord. It is the only basis and ground of assurance over against the Adversary, that God's righteousness has been satisfied, is satisfied. And if you are satisfied, what more do you want? If God is satisfied, what more does He want? God, may I say it reverently, is not wanting to surfeit Himself. If He is satisfied, He is satisfied, and until you and I get perfectly settled on this matter we will never be settled at all in any way, and the enemy will play havoc with us.

But there is a lot in view; there is a wilderness in view, and there is a warfare in view. That is to say, there is a lot of experience and history to go through in our walk day by day, a lot of testing, a lot of trying of faith, a very great deal to meet of adversity in conditions and circumstances. We have a pilgrimage before us, and much spiritual conflict in the heavenlies with principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness and all that. We have to meet it all in virtue of the Blood. It is the same means for the overcomer to reach the throne, as is seen in the book of Revelation, as it is for the sinner to find acceptance with God in new birth—the Blood of the Lamb, and that means God's righteousness fully satisfied.

The virtue of the Blood is its sinlessness, and it is reserved for God. Always remember that. Throughout the Old Testament, if one thing is thundered, it is this, *Drink it not. It is reserved for God.* Blessed be God, in the new covenant God gives it to us to drink, but never, never until God's Lamb has been slain. When His Lamb has been slain, really slain, not in type but in reality, there is the sure ground for us to receive from God the life which is indestructible because it is incorruptible. No man under the types ever possessed incorruptible life, but we do. That is why the Lord said about John the Baptist, *"There hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."* When you begin in the kingdom, you begin at a higher point than ever the prophets or John reached. You have eternal life, incorruptible life. What an elevation upon which to begin! It is a mighty beginning.

I was saying there are two sides to the Lamb. Firstly, as we have seen, there is the Blood, the mighty testimony to God satisfied, God's righteousness satisfied, a mighty testimony therefore against death. But further there is the flesh for eating; and, beloved, it is just as important a thing for you and for me to take account of the significance of the flesh for eating, as it is for us to take account of the mighty value of the Blood. In Paul's words it is put thus, *"I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me."* That is making Christ our life. That is taking the flesh of the Son of Man. That means that we cease and He takes our place. Now, that is blessed truth, but it is challenging truth, and it is just there, in the taking of His flesh by faith that we come into

such a vital relationship with the Lamb that, from God's standpoint, what is looked for and what is required is that for us to live is Christ.

Now, what is the Lamb? Going back to our previous meditation, the Lamb represents these two things: firstly, purity, which implies freedom from the blemish of all self-life; and secondly, unquestioning yieldedness to the will of God, which is the same thing in other words.

The Goal to which God is Working

Now, that is what God is looking for, and I want to say to you, beloved, that I believe that is exactly what God is working at in you and in me. Oh, I wish that we recognized it sooner. God's dealings with us are all for this one thing, to produce the Lamb in us. To Peter the Lord said, *"When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not."* That is the transition, you see, and that implies spiritual history. Self-direction, self-realization, self-expression, ambition, oh how much there is of this in our young days of devotion to the Lord, when we are so strongly convinced it is all for Him. You and I have to go through a lot of history before we discover that even our devotion to the Lord was tainted, that all that service for the Lord did have somewhere behind it our coming into place and being something for the Lord. It is so subtle, it is so deep, and nothing but history, deep history with God, can make us believe that it is not really pure devotion to the Lord. But we do come to see that, do we not? Is it not true that the longer we go on, the more we realize the depth of the impurity of our own hearts? How we like to be used! How we like to be in the work! How we like to have opportunities and open doors! We like it. Yes, it is only the old Adam coming up in another guise, and it is a deep, deep history that brings us to the place where we shrink and would run far from work for the Lord unless we are a hundred percent assured that the matter in hand is truly of the Lord and He Himself the real doer of it. He is producing the Lamb in us.

What is purity again? Purity is singleness of eye for the glory of God, and you and I never know, until God has taken us through deep fires, whether our hearts are really pure in devotion to the Lord. I mean, it takes a lot, a great deal, of deep dealings with us by the Lord to bring us to a place where we are really safe from ourselves in the service of the Lord, where it really is transparently the glory of God that we have at heart. We would all say it is, but oh, God knows! God knows!

Singleness of eye, unquestioning yieldedness in obedience to the will of God, ... how many of us are there when it comes to the test? But God is working to produce, or reproduce, the Lamb in us, the overcoming by letting go. How far are we on that road, of triumphing by yielding? That is the Lamb, and that is the Lamb in the midst of the throne. God's ideas of being in the throne are very different from ours. The greatest strength is in the greatest love, and you and I know nothing about spiritual strength until the love of God has really got hold of our hearts, so that it is no longer a case of love for the Lord's work, but love for the Lord Himself. Oh, this is very testing, very challenging, and no one knows it more than I do. What is the goal? It is conformity to the Lamb. *"Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year."* Says Peter, *"... a lamb without blemish and without spot."* We have seen what the blemishes and the spots are, and they can be summed up in one word, namely, the self-life.

"Come hither. I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb." What are we going to see? Well, Paul will tell us, *"Christ loved the church..." "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also 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."* ... a Lamb without spot, without blemish. A bride without spot, wrinkle or blemish, conformed to the Lamb. That is the marriage. The marriage can take place then. No incompatibility of temperament is to be found here. There will never be any dissolving of this union. So, for here is utterness in likeness, conformed to the image of His Son. That is what God is doing in you and in me now and our fullest service, beloved, lies ahead in the ages to come. The most important thing now is the development of the Lamb nature in us and our value to Him later on depends entirely upon that, for all the values of that heavenly position and that heavenly ministry are connected with the Lamb.

Is it reigning? Then it is the throne of the Lamb. Is it a river of life to go out to all? Again, it is the very throne of the Lamb. Is it a light in the city? Then it is the light of the Lamb. Is it a meeting-place, a temple? Then the Lamb is the temple. It means that what Christ is as the Lamb is to be all-governing at the centre of this universe in the ages to come. The Lord is seeking to bring us into that. It is so weak, so despicable, from this world's standard. Lamb-like! That is a term of disparagement to this world. But God sets everything by that. Oh, that the world had eyes to see, to interpret present happenings on the earth! You can see what the beast does, can you not? And you can see the necessity for the beast giving place to the Lamb today. God works out His purpose in history and at last all the universe has to bow and say, "You are right! What we need is not the beast, but the Lamb." It is the power to let go, to yield, to be emptied, to serve, to glorify God.

Well, I think we will not go further than that. I wanted to say more about the issue of life, because that is the issue, after all. Marvelous is that sixth chapter of John. You notice the context of the words *"Him the Father, even God, hath sealed."* From that point the Lord goes on to say (His metaphors change, but the principle is the same), *"I am the Bread which came down from heaven for the life of the world."* *"My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."* *"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves..."* The chapter is just full of life by appropriating Christ, God's Lamb. Life by appropriating the Lamb! All is in terms of the Lamb. When we think, when we talk about feeding upon Christ, receiving Christ, Christ being our life, let us not think in abstract terms of vital forces and so on.

Let us remember that it is a moral state before God. Christ my life. Oh no, not if I think of Him as just being my energy. I mean that Christ does not give me energy, as such. If I am going to know the power and energy of Christ, I have to know the Lamb nature of Christ. I can put that in other words. You see, the Lord will not just give us energy to do anything we choose. The Lord will be our life to do holy things, and if you and I have anything unholy about us, His life does not function.

That is what you have in James 5, *"Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him."* That sin question always goes alongside of life wherever you look in the Word of God. Sin must be dealt with in order that life may be

available on the basis of righteousness. And then, for Christ to be our life, to be our vital energy, means the Lamb disposition. That is the' single eye, purity of heart, the glory of God, and no one can take the life of God to use that life to do anything for self-glory. You see the point. Oh no, that life is a nature, and it never contradicts itself, never denies itself, never works against itself. It works on its own ground, and for you and for me to know Him more and more as our life means for you and for me to become more like Him as the Lamb of God.

"Behold the Lamb of God!" May we keep on beholding Him.

Chapter 3 - The Passover in Relation to Divine Purpose

"This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Ex. 12:2).

"And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to Jehovah: throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever" (Ex. 12:14).

"Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year" (Ex. 13:10).

"Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover... And the day of unleavened bread came, on which the passover must be sacrificed... And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I shall not eat it, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he received a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves... And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. And the cup in like manner after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:1,7,14-17,19-20).

"For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim (narrate) the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

"Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant even our Lord Jesus..." (Heb. 13:20).

I think it unnecessary to stay for long to argue or discuss so obvious a thing as the connection between the Passover and the Lord's Supper. There is little doubt that the Lord Jesus, in the upper room, brought the two together; took up the Jewish Passover, lifted it on to higher ground, invested it with the Divine thought and passed it on as something for the new order of things, that is, for the Church. In doing so, He gave spiritual meaning to all that had been set forth in type in the Jewish Passover, and the first thing which was taken up and has become a primary factor in the Church is what we may call the date question.

The Passover the Beginning of Spiritual History

"This month shall be unto you the beginning of months;" that is, history begins at that point. In the same way that the Passover became marked of the Lord for Israel as the beginning of their spiritual history, so the Lord's death marks the beginning of the history of the Church and of every one of its members. That, of course, is a simple fact which everyone will accept.

But there is something within that fact which has to be recognized. We were pointing out in our previous meditation that in Exodus 12 we begin by finding the whole world, as represented by Egypt, and by Israel in Egypt, lying under judgment; but especially by Egypt, in that the purpose of God in the world had been persistently refused and rejected. His purpose had to do with His Son, His Firstborn. It had to do with firstborn sons. They are represented by Israel in a corporate way. God's purpose was bound up with His Son personally and corporately. That purpose had been made known, and again and again, and yet again, the world had refused the purpose of God. Therefore it is brought fully and finally under the judgment of God.

Spiritual history begins by coming into line with God's purpose and, from the moment of our so coming into line with God's purpose, it is that purpose which governs and constitutes history, gives character to history. It is that purpose concerning His Son which is ever the ground upon which God is making spiritual history, and thus it is that the beginning of everything has, as its deepest meaning, a oneness with the purpose of God. That may not seem to convey very much to you, but I would stay just a moment, because, unless we grasp the fullness of the Divine thought in redemption, we are not going to make very good progress. Israel's slow, tedious progress in the wilderness was due to their failure of heart-apprehension of Divine purpose. They were all the time turning in upon themselves as to the gains and losses to themselves of this way; as to the advantages and disadvantages of having come out to the Lord; as to how it would affect or was affecting them. Thus they were all the time governed in their relationship to the Lord by the effect of things upon themselves. Today things are fairly favourable, and they are ready to go on with a bound. Tomorrow things are not so favourable, and they are all of a haste to go back with a run. According as the life affected them, so was their reaction or response. They had failed to see that this whole thing was related to God's purpose. Their blessing and gain, of course, lay in the purpose of God being realized. Beloved, it is important for you and for me to know that we are not just saved for the sake of being saved and blessed and given heaven and delivered from all sorts of troubles. We are saved unto God's eternal purpose, and we have to allow purpose, that purpose, to govern when things are not going easily or favourably, and not allow ourselves to drift away from the purpose. The beginning of history is the beginning of the realization of God's purpose. History is the history of God's purpose begun and carried on in our spiritual experience.

Redemption is Unto God

Now this purpose is bound up with the Church, designated in Hebrews 12, as we remember, *"the Church of the Firstborn."* This is the antitype of what we have in Exodus 4. *"Israel is my son, my first-born... Let my son go that he may serve me."* That is the purpose. It is bound up with the Church of the firstborn ones. Thus you come to Exodus 13, and you have the separation or consecration of the firstborn unto the Lord. On the ground of the Passover, the Passover lamb, the firstborn are separated unto God. This brings in this very definite and positive fact that redemption is unto God Himself. You will remember a very positive word on this matter in Acts 20:28: *"Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* And in Rev. 5:9: *"Thou... didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every... nation."* Purchased unto God, redeemed unto God — the absolute proprietorship of the Lord over the redeemed. This is a thought which needs to be more deeply rooted in our consciousness. It will save us from many of the weaknesses of our Christian lives.

God Himself has shed His own Blood to purchase unto Himself a people. If God has done that, beloved, if He really has purchased us with His Blood in relation to a purpose which is infinitely precious to Him, then, given the chance, He will effect that purpose and reach His end and perfect that which concerneth us. Thus it is that the Apostle says, *"The God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant... make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight."* If He has His chance, He is going to reach His end in His Church. He has purchased the Church with a great price, and He is not satisfied just to have us out of Egypt, out of the world, and called by His name. He is going to give Himself right on to the end to the accomplishing of the thing which He has in His heart and which has governed Him in our redemption. We are purchased unto God. It brings a tremendous amount of help to remember that. As we go on, we are more and more deeply conscious of our utter worthlessness and the impossibility of our ever being of value. We

become more and ever more conscious of what is in the way in our nature, and we despair if our eyes rest upon ourselves. Our deliverance, our way through, our hope and our assurance, lie with God. Our hope is in Him, and the foundation is this, that He purchased us with His own Blood in order to accomplish a work upon which He has set His own heart; and, given the chance, God will never be defeated. He will perfect that which concerneth us.

The book of the Revelation has this amongst its many values, that it shows us the end reached, and there the Church of the firstborn ones, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, has become conformed to the image of the Lamb and is with Him in glory. The thing is done and we see God's end reached. He purchased with an object, and if you and I give Him the chance and do not rebel as did Israel, He is going to perfect that which concerneth us, *"make us perfect in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight."*

Spiritual History in the Making

If we did but recognize it, if our eyes were fully opened, we should see, amongst other things, that He is doing this by deepening and strengthening in us in the inward man a revolt against ourselves. If you and I were once for all delivered from this dead body, this nature of ours in the old creation, and we had no more consciousness of it, no more trouble with it, no temptation in our flesh whatsoever, there would be no reason whatever for our remaining here on this earth, no reason at all. We ought, in the moment in which that takes place, to go to glory. Why, then, are we here? One of the greatest realities of our spiritual history is this, that, on the one side, we are more and more coming to know the depth of sin and iniquity in the old creation which is about us. It is still with us. But, on the other hand, there is in us the hatred of it, the growing revulsion against it, the deepening cry for deliverance from it, and the love for something other than it. Beloved, that is one of the chief values in our spiritual history. Of course, we would think it to be the greatest value if we could get rid of all the other at a stroke; for if you are perfect, all your longings are at an end and the goal is reached. But it is by this deepening and strengthening of a revolt against something and a reaching out for something else, that the Lord is instructing us and working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight. He is building up an inner man.

You and I must never expect, while we are here on earth, that we are going to be other than increasingly conscious of the depths of sinfulness in the old nature. The tragedy would be if ever we were to surrender to that and say it is always to triumph, and not recognize that there is a Spirit in us which is of the new creation, which is not that at all, but which is walking after God, walking after holiness, and that the strength of our loathing of that which we find in our flesh is the measure of the work of grace in us. The people who are farthest on are not those who are least conscious of sin in themselves, in their old nature, but those who have the greatest revolt against themselves. I believe that is what was in the heart of the Apostle Paul, when, so late in his life, he wrote those words to the Philippians recorded in the third chapter, that cry to *"be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, but... the righteousness which is from God by faith... Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but..."* Here, late in life, the consciousness of that man is that there is a long way yet to go. This intensity of going on with God, despite all this other, this is spiritual progress. It is the capacity for blushing at our failures, the capacity for being ashamed of ourselves, the sensitiveness over our own spiritual weakness and moral breakdown. That is spiritual growth, that is spiritual refinement. God is working His purpose in us, and I think we should not be wrong in saying, if we be truly of those who have really been going on with God, that so far from feeling we are most holy, we shall, with our last breath, feel most desperately the hopelessness of our old nature, and reach out most tremendously unto Him as our righteousness.

What is the point of this word? Well, God took the initiative in redemption and took the initiative with purpose, and paid the greatest price that can be paid to secure a vessel for

His purpose. Then, if that is true, God will carry through His work and make a full end of it, if we will but remember that it is not a matter of the present advantage to us. It is not a question of how this in the meantime affects us. The one question is: What is God getting out of our experience? This trouble, this trial, this affliction, this adversity, this suffering today, how shall we view it? Shall we view it as Israel persistently reviewed their difficulties in the wilderness with the 'I' looming large? If we do, then it *is* a wilderness indeed. But if we view everything in the light of God's purpose, and apprehend that purpose by faith, then at the other side of this trial, of whatever nature it may be, we shall be seeing that the Lord has got some more territory in us, the Lord has gained something. The older we get, the longer we go on with the Lord, the more we are able, although never sufficiently able, I fear, to regard our difficult days in this way; not to murmur and exclaim, Oh, some more suffering! But rather to take the position, The Lord has something in this. Let us not look at the things which are seen. Let us believe God, that over at the other side of this we shall be saying, Yes, the Lord got something through that! He has redeemed us unto Himself, and He is working all the time unto Himself, and we believe that, when the Lord has secured the territory He would have in us, then He can lead us into His territory and give it to us.

I think those are the two sides of Israel's history. Israel never got the land until the Lord got what He wanted in them. Joshua and Caleb represented men in whom the Lord had obtained a full place, and the generation which followed that first unbelieving generation represented a people in whom the Lord had secured what He had all the time been seeking; and when the Lord has got what He is after in us, then He can lead us in to enjoy His fullnesses. Remember that we never come into the blessing until the Lord has come into His portion. Today is the day when the Lord is getting something; for us it is dark. Tomorrow, when the Lord has got what He is after, then we too have something and it is light.

Chapter 4 - The Feast of Unleavened Bread

"And Jehovah spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Exodus 12:1-2).

We started out in our previous meditation by indicating the connection between the Passover of the Jews and the Lord's Supper of the Church as brought about by the Lord Jesus Himself in the night in which He was betrayed, and what we set out to see was that the Passover or the Lord's Supper, and what they represent of the death of Christ, is the beginning of the history of the Lord's people. All history, from God's standpoint, begins there, and, although Christendom may have created its Calendar and we talk about 1941 A.D., you have to take thirty-three years of that away before you start history from God's standpoint. The Cross of the Lord Jesus was the zero hour of this universe from God's standpoint. The Cross of the Lord Jesus is the zero hour of the history of every child of God, and nothing is taken account of by God before that, and from that and what that represents as a basic thing in history, in spiritual history, from that everything is taken account of as being of God. Now, if we can understand that, we shall have the key to everything and find a very great deal of help.

One of the outstanding features of the Passover was the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Chapter 13 of Exodus deals especially with that. In Chapter 12 verse 8 it is mentioned. *"And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs they shall eat it."* Then that little clause *"and unleavened bread"* is taken up in Chapter 13, and we have a quite extensive paragraph on the matter.

"Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to Jehovah. Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee, in all thy borders." (verses 6 and 7.) Now you notice that Luke makes much of that — Chapter 22:7: *"And the day of unleavened bread came, on which the passover must be sacrificed."*

It is already mentioned in verse 1: *"Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover."*

That introduces the Passover and the Lord's Supper, as you will see, and that feast of unleavened bread carried on for seven days — that is a perfect spiritual period, and gives a special significance to spiritual history. Until you and I have learned the meaning of unleavened bread we have not begun real spiritual history, for such history begins by a very definite, positive establishing, as a memorial, of the meaning of unleavened bread.

I think we know what leaven stands for. To say that it is sin is far too general; it is not specific and definite enough. Of course, it is sin; but leaven is the old nature; it is the natural or the carnal man; it is that energy of the old creation; it is that ferment of the flesh; it is that seething that is in us that is ever trying to work its way out, to express itself, to enlarge itself, to inflate itself, to make its presence and influence felt, to get, possess, to get hold — all that sort of thing which is the flesh, an active element in the old carnal nature. Now that history has to have a definite crisis and be brought to an end in that crisis, has to be smitten in the death of the Lord Jesus, and not until the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread have been completed can we begin our history in living union with God's Son. That is fundamental to spiritual history.

An End and a Beginning

We have said that God takes account of nothing until the Passover is fulfilled, and everything that is of God begins and takes its rise at the point where the feast of unleavened bread is completed. That is a tremendous thing to say, beloved, but because

that has not been recognized, there is the tragic history of very much done for the Lord of which He takes no account, it did not originate with Him. Failure to recognize this, and failure to have this thing really established has been and is the ground of a very great deal of Christian deception. It is an assumption, an assumption that we are the Lord's and that all is well, and Satan loves an assumption, loves people to assume, for assumption is that ground which is most fruitful for his deceptive work. What I mean is this. If with us, with you, with me, there is a coming into the things of God with an unbroken natural will, with an unsubdued natural mind, with an uncrucified natural ambition, that is fertile land for deception. Satan can get a great deal where things are like that. Somewhere, secretly, deeper than our recognition and perhaps consciousness, there is an ambition, ambition for service, for ministry, to do something, to be something, to see something; the ferment of the leaven of the old nature still at work and is brought over to the things of God. The result? Oh, if not entirely, a very large proportion of what follows is not out from God; it is a history of something which is energized by us in the Name of the Lord; a life which has its spring in ourselves although for the Lord. It has leaven in it, it has the natural energy, the natural mind, the natural judgment, the natural reason, the natural will, the natural ambition, the natural emotion. God says that everything of Himself begins at zero where we can produce nothing.

That lamb slain in its representative capacity said that on that side everything was finished. It was made sin, made a curse and smitten — the Cross is God's zero-hour for the old creation. From that time, only that which comes directly, immediately out from God Himself is spiritual history, is Divine history, in us. It is only that which counts, it is only that which knows the Lord, it is *only* that which gets back to the Lord, it is only that which accomplishes the Lord's purpose. Nothing takes its rise in us.

The feast of unleavened bread is a very serious business to be carried on throughout seven days. It says — No place with God for this natural life! It is corrupt. It has in it that seething ferment of pride. Somewhere behind everything there is pride. That is the poison which came into the race from the serpent who said, *I will. I will exalt my throne. I will be equal to the Most High. I! I! — that is leaven. The leaven is the 'I' in some form or other. I am not saying, beloved, that you and I can track it out in all its forms, but what we have to recognize is that it is there, and not one of us dare for an instant say, It is not so with me! You and I have to come to God's position about ourselves, and not one of us must seek to justify ourself in God's presence. What we have to do is to say that God's verdict is a true verdict, and, by nature there is in me the deep, active poison of an 'I' life. It is there whether I am alive to it all the time or not. It is there whether I feel most devoted to the Lord or not. It is there. As truly as we have this blood coursing in our veins, the blood of this humanity, we have in that blood the seed of a fallen nature, and that fallen nature in its principle is 'I', and that 'I' is ever aiming at getting hold of the things of God. Let us not forget that. The very heart of that is to get hold of the things of God. Satan said, "*I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: ...I will be like the Most High.*" I will get hold of what is God's!*

That was Jacob's terrible, terrible mistake. Yes, the birthright was for Jacob, but, mark you, it was God's. Jacob had a perception of the value of Divine things. Jacob had a sense of the importance of the things of God which his brother had not, but Jacob was not content to believe, to trust that God would secure in him those Divine things, and for him and to him. Jacob, recognizing the value of Divine things, in the ferment of the leaven of the self-life must act to get his hands upon those things. You and I may be quite right in our perception of the value of Divine things, but to get them into our own hands is quite another matter; to have blessing for self, to have power to use, to have position for influence, all of which may subtly be the bringing of us somewhere — that is leaven. God cannot go on with Jacob. Twenty years of deepest discipline must lie between that first act of putting his hand upon

Divine things and his being brought into the good of them; deep, deep history. That is the history of most of us. History begins there, with a feast of unleavened bread. It begins with a repudiation unto death of the self-life, the "I" principle.

In Israel it had to be very thorough. They had to search their houses with candles for any hidden leaven, and even then in their ritual afterward, before they dare offer their sacrifice, having searched, they had to make a declaration to the effect — We have searched our houses for leaven, we have done that which is commanded us in the law, but if there yet be something hidden which we have not discovered, we forswear it! It had to be very thorough.

The Feast of Remembrance

And the Lord said, This shall be a memorial throughout your generations forever! And whenever the feast of the Passover came, year by year, the feast of unleavened bread led up to it, was bound up with it. What then was its significance? It was a remembrance of a great act of separation, separation from evil. As they sat down to the feast, the story was told year by year of what the Lord did to the Egyptians, and how the Lord brought them out of Egypt, and the Lord says, This must be throughout your generations forever.

Now beloved, if the Lord's Supper corresponds to the Passover in spiritual principle, do you not see that every time we come to the Lord's Table we are telling the story? That is exactly the meaning of Paul's words in 1 Cor. 11, "*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim...*" declare, set forth, narrate. We tell the story in act, we act the story.

The Lord marked the beginning of our spiritual history with a feast of unleavened bread. He brought us out of Egypt. What is Egypt? Well, Egypt typifies the strength and glory of the flesh: and how God had to get Egypt out of the very bones of Moses! He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and for forty long years in the wilderness Egypt was being smitten in Moses. He started out in the energy of Egypt, he started out in the wisdom of Egypt, he attempted the things of God with Egyptian resources, his position, his abilities — and God said, No! The feast of unleavened bread for forty years, and we start at zero! The man who is going to be used as an instrument for bringing people out on to heavenly ground must go through discipline. He must find heavenly ground and be emptied of all earthly ground, all natural ground. The Lord makes this divide very clear.

I know perhaps some of you are thinking, Well, where are we? We have been Christians for years; in some cases, many years. Where are we? What is our position? Well, beloved, we have to face God's facts. I am not saying that we are not Christians, that we do not belong to the Lord, but I am saying that you and I have to face God's position squarely and it is never too late to do that. God is working with us all the way along to bring us back. Oh, that we had seen it all at the beginning, but even if we had, I wonder if we could have accepted it. I wonder if it is not necessary for us to go through things in order to accept new light. We are never really brought into light by a presentation of truth. We really only come livingly into things when something has happened in us, and it takes time. However, here we are, and whatever may be said about this, here is God's position, and I ask you faithfully and solemnly, have you had a feast of unleavened bread, do you really know the consummation of that feast in the Passover in your history? If not, you have reason to question a great many things. Some of us know the divide which that makes. There have been years of very energetic, active, enthusiastic, exhausting Christian work, preaching and what not; but oh! how we look back on those years with regret and shame, that, with all the zeal and all the energy, how little, how very little comparatively of a real coming out from the Lord, and we have to ask many questions about those years. The one thing that is quite patent to us is that we were the energizers, we were the fountain of the activity, we were doing it, we were in it, and much more than that.

Then God brought to us the feast of unleavened bread. It was a dry time. Unleavened bread is not palatable — a good many bitter herbs are associated with unleavened bread. The flesh does not delight in that diet. But it was and it is a real thing; it is coming to God's zero, and, whatever may have been the sense then of weakness and failure and imperfection, we do know one thing, that that feast of unleavened bread marked a new beginning where the Lord was concerned, marked a new coming in of the Lord, and marked a new realm of life and work. From that time we know one thing if we know nothing else, namely, that from that time onward it is the Lord and not ourselves, and the Lord has kept us on that principle Himself, smiting, continually smiting, any deviation from the point where it was the Lord; and that has been a memorial throughout our generation. The Lord brings us back to that again and again I ask *you*, do you know that real crisis?

Life through Death

It is this to which the Apostle refers as being the very secret of life, the secret of Divine life. It is here that Divine life takes its rise. The river of Divine life springs out of the Cross, and he says, *"Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body"* (2 Cor. 4:10). *"Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus"* — strange language! *"...the putting to death of Jesus."* That is one aspect of the death of Christ, only one aspect. There are others, but that is a very important aspect. *The putting to death of Jesus.* Why was He put to death? He was put to death because He stood by choice, voluntarily, of His own will, in the place of the old creation; in your place, in my place. He was put to death as representing the natural life of the old creation which He took upon Him, not His but ours. And you and I are always to be bearing about in the body that putting to death. If that is so — the putting to death of the old nature, the 'I', the self, the flesh, the carnal principle, the leaven of this nature — then the life also of Jesus is manifested in our mortal flesh. You see, there is no life save by way of that death. All life comes by the way of that death. What is the value and working of this life?

Well, we are to reckon ourselves as alive unto God. What is it to be alive unto God? Beloved, this being alive unto God means a new kind of living knowledge and intelligence, which is not the knowledge and the intelligence of the old man. That old reason has been put to death, and now it is a new knowledge. I ask you again, is it true in your case that, because of a definite crisis in the feast of unleavened bread, that knowledge which you have is a living knowledge which has come after that crisis, or have you carried over the old man, the old reasoning, the old judgment, into the things of God? If so, you see, you are dead while you live, and I believe that is the reason why so many Christians are without living revelation.

Beloved, believe me, it is the birthright of every child of God to have living revelation of God, to know the Lord by revelation of the Holy Spirit. It is your birthright. Oh, if every Christian was there, had that, what a different situation there would be! If every child of God really was living in the light of direct revelation of the Lord in the heart! It may be through the Word, but it is ours, we have our own personal blessed enjoyment of the Lord revealing Himself to us. If that is not true, then I do not understand my Bible. I have to close a great deal of the Word of God and say, Well, that does not mean what it says! What is the meaning of the anointing that abideth in us and teacheth us all things, as John says? What is the meaning of this that the Lord has been saying about *"when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me..."*? What is the meaning of it if it does not mean that every child of God should have, perhaps in small beginnings, but in ever-growing and enlarging measure, a direct and personal inward knowledge of the Lord, so that the Lord speaks to that child of God in an inward way regarding His will, His mind, His thoughts,

and teaches them all the time. It is true, beloved, this is life, it is the life that does it. The Spirit of life will touch you on every point where the Lord has something to say. If you are alive to God, the Spirit of God will touch you as to the Lord's mind on everything where there is a need for Him to say something.

He will touch you on the matter of dress. He will touch you on the matter of your conversation. He will touch you upon some inconsistency in your life, some unrighteousness in your transactions. He will touch you upon the question of trustworthiness. He will even touch you on the matter of punctuality in keeping your engagements. He will touch you on anything where He has something to say on a matter of rectitude, conscientiousness. Oh, there is nothing more character-forming than a life in the Holy Spirit. This is life, and it is revelation, it is knowing the Lord. Do not think of knowing the Lord and revelation of the Lord merely as a beautiful unveiling of a wonderful God in glory. No, the revelation of the Lord is this, on these practical matters. Oh yes, we have been through it. I know it is true and you know it is true. To walk with God is to be checked up, and being checked up by the Holy Spirit is knowing the Lord.

Well now, being alive unto God as from the dead it cannot be until the feast of unleavened bread has been established. It does mean that our own will and mind and desire and everything that is of ourselves must have been smitten. There must have been a crisis. It is not done once for all, completely and finally, in an act, although something is done. Something has been broken, and from that time God has a way in, and as you and I respond to what God is putting through that way which He has secured, the thing grows and grows, and things which to us at one time were perfectly harmless we cannot do now. The Lord is gracious in these matters. He does not bring it on us all at once, but it is wonderful how, when we go on with the Lord, we change. We drop certain things, we change, and how does it come about? Well, if we put it into words, we would say, I came to feel the Lord did not want that or did want it. I believe that that ought to be the expanding experience of every child of God. It should be. Now, don't turn in and begin to go over your spiritual wardrobe, and see whether you can do without this or that. That would not be true spirituality. Walk with the Lord and you will find the wardrobe changes.

Oh, trust the Holy Spirit and He will put you right on everything. But, mark you, basic to everything, there has to be a feast of unleavened bread, that is, the whole life of nature must have been smitten at its root; the putting to death of Jesus must have had a radical start in us. But if the whole history of believers, of the Church, takes its rise from that, if that is where everything begins, then, from God's standpoint, there is no Church except on the basis of a feast of unleavened bread; and there is no history, nothing exists, until that has been done. That is why He stressed this matter so much, because there could be nothing, there would be nothing, and God was after something, but all of Himself, all out from Himself.

The Lamb Newly Slain

So the little clause "with unleavened bread" is taken up and expanded in a certain connection, the separation of the firstborn. The letter to the Hebrews tells us what that is. *"Ye are come... to the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven,"* and when you come to see what that enrolment means, turning to the book of the Revelation, it has to do with the Lamb's book of life. The *Lamb's* book of life, and you look to see the Lamb and it is ever as though it had been slain, in the throne. When the Lamb has reached the final position in glory and exaltation and power, He is still presented as though He had been slain. There is an element in the statement there which suggests, 'as though it had just been slain, newly slain'. God keeps that thing fresh right to the end and the throne, and the Church of the firstborn ones whose names are enrolled in heaven in the Lamb's book of life

are those whose history is based on the Passover, on the slaying of the Lamb, at the end of the feast of unleavened bread. That is not just typology. It is tremendously searching truth.

If every celebration of the Communion Service had that behind it, what a different state there would be in the world today. What a tragedy that God's thought about this matter has been lost. It has become a rite, a ceremony. Surely those of us who gather around the Lord's Table will have to take this thing very much more seriously.

All Israel is found together in this lamb. There may have been thousands of lambs in Israel, but in heaven there is only one Lamb. Carrying this over to the Lord's Supper, there is only one Lamb, and there ever was only one Lamb in God's eye. All feasted upon one Lamb, all united in one Lamb, all united by reason of sharing one Lamb, so that this was a fellowship, a feast of fellowship, a fellowship in feasting. What is the basis of real fellowship? We all agree that the Lord's Table ought to be the central thing in our fellowship, it ought to be that in which our fellowship is expressed more than in anything else. What is the basis of fellowship? Oh, what Paul says is so true to principle. Look again at the situation at Corinth — the Lord's Table was there, but there was anything but fellowship. All were divided, one against another in the church, and yet they were coming to the Lord's Table and contradicting its central thought. Paul says, *"He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."* Our coming to the Table must be on the basis of fellowship which is without condemnation; it is unleavened bread. You know as well as I know that there can be no fellowship amongst the Lord's people until the 'I' has been smitten. It is the 'I', it is the self, it is the personal, that breaks fellowship; it is our reason, our desire, our wish, our conviction.

Oh, the tragedy of endless divisions and splitting up of the Lord's people! They are going on and ever going on. Well, it is simply man's mind coming into play about a certain Christian truth — splitting hairs, we call it. It is man's mind. It is because there is really no basic unleavened bread. The natural man has not been set aside. Well, we cannot have fellowship unless that is done. Unleavened bread is essential to a feast of fellowship, but, blessed be God, if it is true that basically that thing obtains, well, there may be all sorts of things about us naturally that would cause breaking up, scattering, but that basic thing has happened and we go on. We are all very different naturally and there is much about us all which would make it quite impossible for other people to get on with us, but I venture to say that in us some basic thing has been done. The Cross has done something somewhere, and that is the security of our fellowship. I believe that the thing that has been done, in measure at least, is that personal interest has been smitten, and it is just the Lord Himself Who reigns; for Him all that is personal can be let go.

We really must ask the Lord about this matter of unleavened bread, because, as I have said, our glorious history of life and all that that life means in its working out, springs out of this. Where there is leaven there is death because there is corruption; where there is no leaven there is life because the root of corruption, the seed of corruption, has been smitten. The Lord teach us the importance of this!

Chapter 5 - The Blood of an Eternal Covenant

"And Jehovah spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for an household... Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at even. And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two sideposts and on the lintel, upon the houses wherein they shall eat it... For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments; I am Jehovah. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial..." (Ex. 12:1-3,5-7,12-14).

"And the cup in like manner after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you'" (Luke 22:20).

"In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:25).

"Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:20-21).

The Significance of the Numbers in the Passover Account

It is around those words in Hebrews 13:20 we shall meditate for a little while, trying to draw light from the great type in Exodus. In that account of the first Passover, there are some very simple means of helping us to understand this profound and wonderful truth of the eternal covenant, and I think they are very largely represented for us by the various numbers used in that account. You, of course, will have noticed how God lights upon certain numbers and connects the various phases of the Passover with those numbers.

(a) Seven — The Seventh Day, the Seventh Month

In the first place, there is the seventh day which becomes the first. The seventh month of the civil year of Israel is made the first month of their religious year. *"This (seventh) month shall be unto you the beginning of months."*

Seven has a very definite and clear place in this whole matter of the Passover. As we saw in our previous meditation, there were the seven days of unleavened bread, setting forth the completeness, the finality of the setting aside of all the life of nature; that is, of the old nature, the energy of the fallen creation. Seven is the number of spiritual perfection, completeness. It is three and four. Three is the number which stands for God and four for creation, and, so far as God is concerned with the old creation, it is finished. Seven days of unleavened bread tell us quite definitely that before we can come to the ground of the eternal covenant, before we can come to the life side of things, before all that God purposes can be entered into by us, there has to be a nullifying, a putting away, a complete separation from all that is represented by leaven, which typifies the seething disturbance of the old creation, the self-element in human nature, the "I" principle. Thus the very first number here leading to the covenant is that which tells us quite positively that the ground of the eternal covenant which God makes demands that there shall have been a death to the old creation.

It is interesting to notice two deaths which took place in Egypt, the death of the firstborn of all the Egyptians, and the death of a lamb: which latter meant that, although the firstborn in Israel did not actually die as the firstborn in Egypt died, in the thought of God they died. It was a death *as* them as well as *for* them. It was by the death of the lamb that they lived, and that lamb was slain between the evenings which concluded the feast of unleavened bread. There was a completeness of attitude toward something God could not accept. Israel, day after day feeding upon this tasteless, unleavened bread, was in the position of denying themselves, taking up their cross; denying, rejecting, repudiating, the cravings of the natural life. They were called upon to make that attitude complete and final throughout seven days, and this was followed by the command to kill it, in respect of the lamb.

You see the meaning; that everyone who is going to come into the eternal covenant, and all that God has bound up with that eternal covenant, is called upon to take a death attitude toward the whole life and order of the old creation, called to take God's attitude, and that is sealed in a representative death. That is what the Lord Jesus meant in His figurative language when He said, except a man were to deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Him, he could not be His disciple. Denying self is repudiating the old creation life and bringing it to the Cross. Well, you see, the first seven in relation to unleavened bread tells us what is necessary to clear the way for God, to clear the way for all that is represented in the eternal covenant.

The Thought of a Covenant Embodied in the Root-meaning of the Word

The word "seven", of course, is the Hebrew word "*sheba*". It is a noun. But it is derived from another word "*shaba*" which means to swear. This is very helpfully illustrated for us in Abraham's covenant with Abimelech recorded in Gen. 21:28-31.

"And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, 'What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves?' And he said, 'These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that it may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well.' Wherefore he called that place Beersheba; because there they swear both of them." Beersheba — the well of the oath of seven. Thus we have seven ewe lambs, an oath and a covenant.

Seven, then, sets forth the idea of a covenant, and if you look, you will find that is brought out in the Word in various connections. The covenant sign given to Abraham was circumcision which had to take place at the completion of seven days. Later, the covenant sign given to Israel through Moses was the seventh or Sabbath day, the sign of the Mosaic covenant. The sign of the covenant given to Noah was the rainbow with its seven colours. But the interesting thing is that, after the seven, you repeat the first, you go back to one in the rainbow. The sign of a covenant — seven, resolving itself again into the first. When you come to the New Testament and to the Church, the Sabbath day gives place to the first day, the seven is handed over to the one, and we read in Acts 20, "*Upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread...*" You have the Lord's Table on the first day, which marks the completion of the circle of seven "*This is my blood of the eternal covenant.*". The covenant idea is carried on, then, for the Church in seven which becomes one, the seventh which becomes the first. What is the sign of the covenant for the Church? It is the Lord's Table.

The Full Thought Underlying "Seven"

But what is this seventh, what does it mean? Well, we know quite well that the first mention of anything in the Word of God is always the key to that thing throughout. God rested on the seventh day: wherefore God hallowed the seventh day. On that day God entered into His rest in respect of the creation. All things were created, and the creation being to God's satisfaction as He viewed it and said, "*It is very good,*" God entered into His rest on the

seventh day and hallowed it because He was satisfied. Carrying that over to the New Testament, you find that, for the Church, God's seven or Sabbath day is the Passover: and what is this Passover? Is it not that God has perfected a new creation in Christ Jesus and is satisfied with His Son? All His works are perfect in Christ, who says, in our language, *"It is finished!"* as He hands back His spirit to the Father. But oh, that English language of ours always lacks something! When the Lord Jesus cried that great cry on the Cross, translated in our versions *"It is finished"* He cried this word, *"Tetelestai!"* which was the formula used by the examining priest of the lamb for the Passover. When he found no fault in it, he said, *"Tetelestai!"* It is perfect! What the Lord Jesus did was to hand back to the Father a life unblemished, unspotted. He was presented to God as a Lamb without spot; and without blemish after all the testing. *"It is perfect,"* He said, not finished. Yes, finished in a certain sense, but the true meaning is, *"It is perfect."* The work is perfect and flawless, the life is perfect and flawless. The whole is rounded off in perfection. The Father is satisfied. That is His new creation in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the embodiment of the new creation which satisfies God when the old creation has gone wrong, and God enters into His rest.

Man's Blessing and Acceptance Founded in God's Satisfaction in Christ

Now note: Adam's first day on this earth was a Sabbath day. God created man on the sixth day, and the first complete day that man had was the Sabbath, and that Sabbath day becomes the first day for man. Carried over to the New Testament, where God finishes and perfects His work as in the Lord Jesus, and enters into His rest, that is God's Sabbath, and we begin. That is our first day — God's rest. I am not going to stop to apply that now. It always carries such a message for our hearts if we will listen to it, that we begin in something that is already perfect. This is the ground of the everlasting covenant. To grasp the significance of that is to see what the eternal covenant is, to come right in on a perfect ground and beginning. That is not how we regard ourselves or how we feel about it, but that is God's place for us. The fact is, beloved, that in Jesus Christ you and I will never be more perfect than we are now or in the day when we believed. Those perfections may be wrought into us progressively, but, so far as the ground of our acceptance is concerned, we are *"accepted in the Beloved,"* and He wholly satisfies the Father; the Father has come to rest in Him. The work is perfect. Our acceptance is always on the ground of God's end reached. Till that is settled, we have no steadying thing when God begins to work in us. Let me stay with that a moment.

If, when God begins to deal with us in discipline and chastening, in training and moulding and formation, we begin at any moment to say, This is all because I am so bad, and the Lord has to do something with me in order that I may be acceptable, you have given your ground away. You will never be more acceptable, however much the Lord does in you. You have been accepted, not on the ground of what you are, however bad or good that may be, but on the ground of the Beloved: accepted in the beloved One. We sing — and I wish we would lay it to heart more and more — that His perfections are the measure of our own by faith. That is where we start. Blessed be God, that is the ground of confidence, and when the Lord begins to take us in hand and we begin to feel what wretched creatures we are, that never implies for a single moment that we are not accepted. The import of the eternal covenant is here in the first place, that we are accepted on the ground of God's satisfaction with His Son. If we were accepted on our own ground, where we stand in ourselves, there would be no eternal covenant, no ground of security at all. It would be a matter of how we might be tomorrow. But no, it is not a matter of how we are or shall be; the ground is settled in Christ. Thereafter God is only getting to work to make good in us what is true in His Son, but it does not change the ground. Do not let us give our ground away. The basis of the eternal covenant, is seven. God has finished His work for us: so God begins in us where He finished in Christ. Seven — the covenant: and the seventh month becomes the first, and likewise the seventh day.

(b) Ten — The Tenth Day

Then the Lord takes another number, and He says, "*In the tenth day of the month... every man a lamb.*" That is a very interesting number. It comes up quite frequently in Scripture and always in one connection. You have the ten commandments. In Matthew 25 you have the ten virgins. In Luke 19 you have the ten pounds, and wherever you find this number coming up, you will find it connected with the fullness of human responsibility. Ten commandments — the fullness of man's responsibility to God. Ten virgins — they are all responsible, that is the point. That is so often missed when men are dealing with the parable of the ten virgins. The point is responsibility. It is the number that gives the character to the parable. These are responsible people. The ten pounds — it is a question of responsibility, trust.

Now here, the point of the tenth day is this, that man has been tested up to the hilt under every condition and has broken down. He has been faced with responsibility to God and has been found wanting. So again there are ten plagues in Egypt, typifying the fullness of human responsibility, and the end of a people proved and found wanting is marked with judgment.

The old dispensation up to Christ covered some four thousand years, which is forty centuries. It is ten times four, typifying the creation under a dispensation of responsibility, and the whole creation is seen broken down and unable to face up to its responsibilities: and so the Lamb comes in. That is why there is judgment here. The ten commandments may be summed up in two words, "*Thou shalt*" and "*Thou shalt not.*" Connected with them always are the features of responsibility, failure, judgment.

Well, what is the hope? Man has been tried under every condition. He was tried in Eden under the most favourable conditions. He broke down. God has tested man under all kinds of conditions through the ages, and in every one man has failed. What hope is there? What hope for God if man is like that? Man is incorrigible!

There is the hope of God's eternal covenant, hope of a glorious destiny for man, who through many, many centuries has proved there is no hope in himself. A Lamb is brought in and that Lamb takes responsibility: the responsibility for what? Ah, that Lamb takes responsibility for God's righteousness. Under every condition God must have righteousness. He is requiring righteousness in man, and unless God can find righteousness in man, then man is a judged and doomed creature. Man has proved all the way along that he cannot satisfy God in the matter of righteousness, and yet he is held responsible, he is a responsible creature. That is why we have a conscience. That is why the whole creation has a conscience, uninstructed in many realms it is true, and darkened and twisted, but a conscience. Back of the most degraded, there is ever this sense, though it be but dim, of standing in relation to a supreme Object which demands his worship. That is conscience in its faintest form: and what is this thing that makes him act so strangely? From the poor, darkened heathen in all his ignorance to the enlightened and mature man of the old army in the last war who I heard brokenly ejaculating something that came back to him from the dim past, after his transport had been torpedoed and while he was floundering in the water awaiting rescue. Somewhere he had heard and in that moment brokenly said, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child"! What brought that back in that moment? It is this sense of responsibility to God that must somehow be met, or man is lost, this sense of an awaiting doom unless in some way he can get through to God. He may not know anything about God, but he senses in himself that God is.

Man is responsible, and he knows it. That is the whole argument of the early chapters of the letter to the Romans that, although man may not know anything about the nature of God, in his conscience he knows that there is such a being as God, and the invisible things of God are shown in the things that are seen. God has His testimony within and without.

Well now, man is responsible, that is the point, and responsible for righteousness, and that sense of responsibility for righteousness makes him do all sorts of strange things under given circumstances. But how can man satisfy God? Oh, it is an awful thing to think that there has come into being a system of religion which is based on the thought of man being able to satisfy God's righteousness by works, by payments, by tithes and dues and penances. It is a fearful thing to substitute the works of a fallen creation for the righteousness of God in Christ! No, man cannot! he cannot.

But this Lamb without spot and without blemish takes the responsibility for the whole matter of righteousness, and when John sees Him he cries, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*" On the brink of the Jordan, where John would have restrained Him from going down into the waters, that Lamb of God turns to him and says, "*Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*" Then John suffered Him. His baptism was a type of His death to satisfy God in the matter of righteousness. How? The offering to God of an unblemished and incorruptible life. God is satisfied. If God can find a Man who can be the representative of all men, and that Man is sinless, then God has His ground of hope and assurance for the realization of His purpose: and that is the Man, Christ Jesus.

There is the other side. This Lamb of God takes responsibility for man's unrighteousness, man's sin, and bears it away. Man has to answer to God for his sin and here is One who says, I will answer for him: "*Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree*" (1 Pet. 2:24). He "*was delivered up for our trespasses*" (Rom. 4:25). Well, that is simple but beautiful Gospel. Never are we tired of listening to that Gospel.

Ten, you see, is the number of responsibility, full responsibility, and the Lamb comes in on the tenth day to take responsibility for man in his failure and for God in His requirements. We put faith in the Lamb and our sins are remitted. This is the Blood of the new covenant which is shed for the remission of sins, and the Lamb answers for us to God in His demand for perfect righteousness.

(c) Fourteen — The Fourteenth Day

The Lamb comes in on the tenth day, but it was not slain on the tenth day. It was kept up to the fourteenth day. A new factor is introduced and we have already mentioned it. It is examined by the expert, it is passed and sealed, but who knows but that it might yet develop some fault. It must be kept under strict observation for these next four days. That brings God's Lamb into view from the day in which He was proclaimed by John, the Lamb of God, to the day in which He was offered, slain. It was a period in which He was being observed. Do you realize, beloved, that during those three and a half years the whole universe had its eyes focussed upon that Lamb. He was the centre of universal interest and attention. Heaven was looking down. Hell was looking on, and hell was intensely interested and intensely active. Men were looking on, and He was put to the utmost test, under the severest scrutiny. Hell was active to produce some blemish upon Him and men were trying to trip Him up and find some occasion of fault in Him: and all heaven was watching the issue of every trial. At the end of that period of observation, He could say, "*Which of you accuseth me of sin?*" He could challenge hell and He could say of His life to heaven, "*It is perfect.*" On the fourteenth day, He is slain: but that is after He has been sealed of God, marked off as His Lamb; tested by hell, watched by men, He offers Himself without spot to God. That is the testimony of God's Word: "*offered himself without spot unto God.*" That is the ground of the eternal covenant. Now we are getting to the point.

The Gift of God in the Eternal Covenant

What is the great factor of the eternal covenant? You see, a covenant is an undertaking, a committal. A covenant means that the one who makes that covenant is saying, I am

prepared to do something! I am going to do something! I make this covenant-deed, and in it I give, I bequeath, I promise...! What is this great thing that God is covenanting to do? What is it that God is giving in the eternal covenant in the Blood of His Son? It is life, eternal life, given in the Blood of His Son, secured unto us in that Blood, and that is why the Apostle puts it in this way, *"The God of peace, who brought again from the dead... through (or in) the blood of an eternal covenant..."* That Blood speaks of the destruction of death and the bringing of life and incorruptibility to light. That Blood speaks of an incorruptible and deathless life over which death has no power; and therefore, because peace has been made by the Blood of His Cross, God must bring back the great Shepherd from the dead. It was not possible that He should be holden of the pangs of death. That which is incorruptible cannot see corruption. That which is deathless, because incorruptible, cannot be holden of death. The Blood of the eternal covenant speaks of an incorruptible, deathless and death-nullifying life: and God has put that into the covenant, and said, This is what I will to you! This is what I bequeath to you through the death of My Son! This is your inheritance, this is your birthright, this is the great gift of God, because of the Blood of His Son! Life, incorruptible life, deathless life: and therefore it is an *eternal* covenant.

You and I, beloved, if we have taken our place on the ground of the covenant in His Blood by faith, if we have recognized and received what God has done by the death of His Son, we have received this eternal life, and that is the guarantee of everything. Thus the Apostle goes on, *"Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight."* You see, here are all the elements of His Son. Is His Son made perfect? then over against that we have *"...make you perfect."* Has His Son fully done the will of God, satisfied the Father and given Him all His good pleasure? Then by the life of His Son in us will God cause us also *"to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight."* This life has brought us on the ground of the Lord Jesus and it has secured the work of God in us to conform us to His Son. It is on the basis of that life, and that life is the principle, the power, the basis upon which God does His work in us. The operation of that life in us by the Holy Spirit is going to bring us to the very place where the Lamb is now.

That is why the whole of spiritual progress, spiritual history, is one of a life and death conflict. It always resolves itself into that, whatever may be the form of the trial, the nature of the experience. The enemy's object is to touch us with death, spiritual death; to wrap us around with death and bring us down under the weight and power of spiritual death. The Lord's object in allowing it all is to teach us how to live by His life, to overcome by His life. It all resolves itself into a matter of the battle for life. But, blessed be God, we have the life which has already overcome. The very life of the Lamb who overcame is in us, the potentiality of His victory is in our hearts now. All that we have to do is to learn how to live by the power that worketh in us, the power of His resurrection life. So the covenant is the covenant which is life for evermore. It is the ground of every hope, every prospect, every possibility for God and for ourselves, and these are the things which go to make the covenant. The Lamb has taken the responsibility for us and for God. The Lamb has been tested and proved, tried in all points and has been victorious. The Lamb, as proved and perfected through suffering, is in the throne, and He has given His very life in terms of precious Blood to those who believe, and that life coming into us, if we will but live by it, learn to live and to overcome by it, that life will bring us back to its own source in Him, that we also shall sit with Him in His throne as He has overcome and is set down with His Father in His throne.

"Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good

thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Chapter 6 - The Cross

Reading: *Rev. 5:1-14; 7:9-17.*

In these chapters in the book of the Revelation we have the final summing up of all things. The universe is represented as gathered and as concerned, and in this final great summing up of everything we find right at the centre that which speaks of the Cross, the Cross central and universal in its significance. It is not only found there at the end, for here we see things according to God's mind as from the beginning; and wherever we look in the Word of God we shall find that the Cross occupies that place.

The Cross Basic to Everything

If we look back to that wonderful symbolical system in the tabernacle, we shall find the Cross there at the centre and at the circumference. The Cross is everywhere. At the heart of things there is the mercy seat, blood sprinkled; all vessels, all curtains, everything, from the inner sanctuary to the outer gate, all coming under the power of the Cross, sprinkled with blood. The same is still true when we pass on to the temple, and then when we move from that to the antitype Himself. If what we were saying in a previous meditation is true, that the birth of the Lord Jesus took place about the time of the feast of the Passover, then we find that His very birth is the introduction of the Lamb, and He is the centre of all interest: The shepherds caring for Paschal lambs leave the flocks and come to *the* Lamb, kings or wise men, whatever they were, from far off come to Him. Earth is interested, heaven is interested, the angels are looking on; and hell too is interested, as is very clearly seen by Herod's reaction. We pass to the day when John proclaimed Him to the Passover multitudes as "*the Lamb of God who beareth away the sin of the world,*" and again the Lamb is central to the universe. Heaven is opened and takes account of Him, and it is not long again before hell lets it be known that it too is concerned; for immediately there was the encounter with Satan himself in the wilderness. Then we move on through His life on earth and we have to realize that He is the focal point of the universe until He reaches the Cross: and it is quite clear that He is the centre of things there. Jews and Gentiles are there, heaven and the angels; and hell and the Devil are there, for it is the hour of the power of darkness. And here at the end in the Revelation, all that is in heaven, in earth and under the earth is gathered; archangels and angels, men out of every tribe and tongue and nation, all gathered here, and, at the centre, the Lamb in the midst of the throne. So then, the Cross is the centre of everything and it is concerning that centrality and that universality that I have felt very exercised that the Lord wants a fresh consideration.

When we speak much about the Cross, it must never be thought that the Cross is some specific line of truth or teaching, so that we compare it with other lines of truth and say, There is this line and there is that line, there is this particular doctrine and that particular doctrine; some emphasize the Cross, some emphasize sanctification, some emphasize the Holy Spirit, and so on. If we did that, we should miss our way altogether. The Cross is not a "line of truth": it is the very hub of all revelation. All other things issue from the Cross and lead back to the Cross. It is the heart of things. Of course, when we speak of the Cross we could use other terms. We could speak of Christ crucified; and that indeed is what we mean. We could speak of the death of Christ: that is involved and implied. When we speak of the Cross, we mean every aspect of the work of the Lord Jesus in His redemptive activity. It all centres in and issues from the Cross.

The Two Sides of the Cross

A word about the two sides of the Cross, the objective and the subjective: these two sides must be maintained in perfect balance. We must not give a greater importance to either over the other. It is possible to give an undue weight to either. In the main, evangelical Christianity has today and through the centuries placed the emphasis upon the objective

side of the Cross. The reaction to that, by reason of the recognition of the tremendous importance of the other side, may carry with it the danger of an over-emphasis there, and I do want, very earnestly and faithfully, to stress the importance of the balance of these two things. I believe that, so far as we are concerned, the Lord has given us the ministry of recovering the lost, or very largely lost, message of the subjective side of the Cross, but I recognize that can be mischievous if it is taken out of its right relation to the objective side and can do a great deal of harm.

(a) The Objective Aspect

The objective side of the Cross is the very anchorage of faith. There we have the whole ground of our position, and there is no value whatever on the subjective side for us until the objective has been thoroughly established. In the first place, position is a matter solely and simply of faith in what has been done for us, and everything has been done for us in the Cross of the Lord Jesus. Altogether without our being able to contribute one iota to that work, it has been carried through in perfection for us. I am not going to stay with the objective side, but I do want to get that settled. As I have said, it settles the whole question of our position through faith. It would be a fatal thing for me to pass on to deal with the subjective side of the Cross until you are absolutely established on this matter of position. It is a most dangerous thing for anybody to be brought to the other side and faced with it until their faith is established and their anchorage of faith is fastened in the objective work of Christ in His Cross. We can never move from that — nor must we. That will be the ground upon which we shall be challenged right up to the end. Really our battleground is not that of the subjective work of the Cross, but of the objective. The whole purpose of the enemy's assault is to rob us of that initial and fundamental assurance as to our standing, as to our position, as to our acceptance, as to our relationship with the Lord. I think we know that, but I do with all my heart lay emphasis upon the necessity for every child of God being perfectly settled and certain concerning what the Lord has done for us as an all-sufficient work, carrying right through to the point where we are, despite our condition, through faith reckoned righteous, and to have such assurance about it that, with every fresh assault of the enemy, we are able to say that he cannot lay a charge at the door of God's elect. He cannot; not because we are perfect; but because of a perfect One who satisfies God for us.

(b) The Subjective Aspect

But then there is the other side. You might think that the objective side is enough. But it is not enough. It is enough for acceptance, it is sufficient for standing, for position, but it is afterward the ground upon which God proceeds to deal with us, and the subjective side of the Cross has to do, not with our *position*, but with our *condition*. The objective side is related to our being in Christ, encircled by Christ, Christ encompassed, our being seen only in Him through faith: the subjective side of the Cross has to do with Christ in us, and with the making good in us of what has already been made good in Him. The objective side has to do with what Christ is in Himself — and never let us cease to contemplate Him in what He is in Himself for us to God, from God to us — the subjective side has to do with what we are and what we are to be.

The Cross is a fact perfectly established. It is an established fact, an accomplished fact, an achieved fact, an end reached, a work perfected, something which is settled for ever in heaven. In that Cross, God has reached His end. The Lamb will never be more in the midst of the throne than He is now. "*Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet*" is something which has been said, and obtains at this moment. But the Cross is not only a fact perfectly established, the Cross is an experience, with a crisis and a process, a crisis out of which a process rises. The Cross is a basis of operations, and it is also the instrument by which those operations are carried on. The Cross represents something that God has done, but it also represents what God is going to do. He proceeds

and takes up His progressive work in us on the basis of His perfected work in His Son. That is simple: but remember these things, bear them in mind. So then, the Cross, as we have seen in our previous meditations, is the zero mark of the creation, an end with a new beginning.

So, beloved, what we have in our hearts as we speak is not to give the technique, the doctrine, the teaching about the Cross merely. We have very practical things in mind. The whole question of our spiritual life, growth, development, measure, is bound up with this matter. We are constantly distressed by the slowness of our spiritual progress, the smallness of our spiritual capacity. We are troubled about ourselves in these matters, and those of us who have responsibility for others are very much troubled at times because of their spiritual poverty and smallness. On the one hand, there is a largeness which is not spiritual largeness, and it is always getting in the way. It may take the form of activity, of doing, or it may be that of assumption, knowing everything and being unteachable, a strength of position; but we know that it is not spiritual measure, not real spiritual measure and value, and it is something which holds the ground in the place of the Lord Jesus Himself. On the other hand, there is the foolishness, the numerous unwise things, the doing of silly things in the Lord's matters, and there is that side of things in what is so small and limited, and it causes a lot of trouble and a lot of heart exercise and heart burning. The whole matter is one of retarded spiritual growth, and the limited measure of real knowledge of the Lord.

One thing which marks that whole realm, whatever aspect may be presented, is a failure in real inward knowledge of, and walk with, the Lord. Well, this is a very practical question. It is a good subject for a workers' conference, and we want to know what is the cause of this state. Why are so few people really spiritually trustworthy so that you can count on them, to whom you can go and be sure that you will get some spiritual judgment, and understanding? Why? Well, countless questions like that could be asked. We are dealing with the whole range of spiritual defectiveness. We are not speaking about that quite legitimate spiritual infancy where you have no right to expect very much that is mature. But we must rule out the time factor, even in that. Do not let us think of spiritual maturity in terms of time, of years. It is marvellous how one almost a babe in his or her relationship with the Lord, in the matter of time, can begin to teach others so early in a really spiritual way. They have leapt into things while others who, so far as time is concerned, have been long, long on the road, are still unable to give a real quota of spiritual value. We want to know why this is. We are all concerned with the matter of spiritual growth, coming to fullness and being of real value to the Lord.

Now that lies behind our present meditation, and I believe, beloved, that spiritual growth hinges upon the question of the subjective side of the Cross. Of course, if the problem be one of continuous breakdown in regard to position, there is something wrong with the acceptance of the objective side of the Cross. If you can never be sure as to whether people are going to be found in faith, then it is time that the matter of position was dealt with and settled once for all; but when it comes to a matter of growth and really positive value to the Lord, then it is a question of the subjective side of the Cross.

The Cross the Zero Mark of the Old Creation

There are some things that have to be settled, and the very first thing that has to be settled for everyone of us, as rooted in the Cross of the Lord Jesus, is man's complete incapacitation. The sooner we come to recognize that in our hearts, the better it will be for us. It is written in that Cross with letters for all to see, that man by nature, so far as the things of God are concerned, is utterly incapacitated; that is, he has lost his capacity for the things of God, he has not that in him which makes it possible for him to enter livingly into the realm of the things of God. That may seem to you to be a simple or elementary thing to

say, but I tell you that is a very, very serious and great matter. There has taken place a universal injury in man's being; throughout his whole being from centre to circumference he is injured, and by that injury is completely ruled out of any place in the things of God.

In the matter of knowing, man not only does not, but cannot know the things of the Spirit of God. Beloved, in you and in me, until the Cross has become an experience, there is no faculty, no capacity, no ability for knowing anything about the things of God. Of course, that at once raises the question of the nature of spiritual knowledge. Oh, of course, we can know the Bible and all that the Bible contains. We can become familiar with the whole range of Biblical truth and doctrine and interpretation and know it all in that kind of way. But when we have exhausted it throughout a long life of application like that, we may still be without the very first glimmer of spiritual knowledge. That is a tremendous thing to say, but it is a fact, or the Word of God is not true. *"Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... he cannot know them"* (1 Cor. 2:14). That is the word. Man is utterly incapacitated by nature so far as spiritual knowledge is concerned; and what is true in the matter of knowledge, is true in every other connection. If he cannot know, he certainly cannot do the things of God. He cannot work the works of God. No, in every way and connection man is incapacitated. So that, for the smallest fragment of really living spiritual knowledge in any direction whatever, there has to be a miracle.

What is a miracle? A miracle is that which transcends the ordinary operation of nature. A miracle is something supernatural, and there has to be a miracle for the first glimmer of real spiritual knowledge. It was that which drew out that spontaneous exclamation of the Lord when Peter said, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."* That, as you know, stood over against His interrogation, *"Who do men say that the Son of man is?"* And men were guessing, men were giving their opinions, their judgment, their reasoned conclusions, the result of their observations. The Lord says, *"Blessed art thou, Simon: flesh and blood is not the medium of that revelation, but My Father which is in heaven."*

Now, beloved, it is a very important thing for us to get down to this matter of the nature of our knowledge. I am going to ask you, How do you know what you think you know about the things of the Lord? How do you know? Were you brought up to believe that, were you taught that in childhood? Have you come by that by going to meetings, by reading your Bible, by the general system of Christian instruction, information, impartation, education? How do you know? If you were challenged on any one point, how would you account for your belief or knowledge? It is not an unimportant thing to sit down with this inquiry, because there are multitudes of people whose heads are full of things, and who are not counting one little bit with their knowledge. Their knowledge does not mean anything. You see, when you have got it all, that whole universe of information, the fact still remains that by nature you are incapacitated, you "cannot." Yes, the very first glimmer of spiritual knowledge comes by revelation and only that which comes by revelation is living, is potent, is fruitful and effectual. That is true. Oh, I would appeal to you to be careful what you take on in the way of teaching. I would not ask you to adopt an attitude of questioning everything, and much less of suspecting everything, projecting your head into everything, but I would appeal to you to take everything before the Lord and say: Lord, that may be true; as far as I can see, it is true. I am ready to believe that it is true, but that has to come into my heart with the quickening power of the Holy Spirit and become a living thing in me as revealed, and not merely as something said or taught, proclaimed or believed by others; that has to become my own personal revelation. Oh, if everybody had all they have got on that basis, what a difference there would be!

Well now, our present point is this, that the zero mark of this creation seen in the Cross of the Lord Jesus declares that we have no capacity whatever by nature. The sooner we recognize that, the better. Really, beloved, in the realm of God's things, we are fools all of us, utter fools. If we go on long enough with the Lord, we shall know it, and we shall

abominate our own foolish talk about the things of God. We are fools. Now, we can get down and use these natural abilities of ours, whether they be very small or seemingly of some consequence, and we can give out the results of our study, investigation and research on Divine things, on the Word of God, and accumulate a great deal; but I want to say to you that our brains are worthless in this matter. The brain will only be a vehicle, a channel, never a means of discovery. Remember that! The very best human brain is never an instrument or means of discovery of anything Divine. It cannot. Its use will simply be as a channel through which revelation will pass for our intelligence as human beings and as intelligent presentation to others. The brain is not the seat of revelation at all: the brain is not the seat of spiritual knowledge. So we can use the little brains that we have until they have exploded and we have got nowhere!

The Test of the Cross

The Cross is, in every matter, a new beginning. As it is the end and says that the old creation at its very best cannot get through, cannot get on in the things of the Spirit of God, it also says, A new beginning is here! You see, the Cross becomes the test. It is the test of all authority. It is the test of all experience; the test of all authority and experience is as to whether the Cross has been a crisis inward thing. When something is given authoritatively, that is, given out as from one who claims to have authority, I want to know the basis of that authority. By what authority do you speak? When anyone speaks to me about an experience they have had, that is not enough for me. Oh, do not be caught by people's experiences. The most dangerous thing is for you to take on other people's experiences and say you would like to have their experience. Multitudes of people have been swept away by experiences of others. I know people who have been all their lives praying, praying, praying for someone else's experience. Now, when an experience is spoken of and set forth, that is not enough. We want to know what is the basis of that experience. We want to test that experience as we want to test that authority, and the test of all authority or experience is here, namely, whether the Cross has in this or that case been a definite crisis experience and become a living power.

You can have experiences, tremendous experiences, an almost perfect counterfeit of Divine things rising out of your own soul life: and we are fearfully and wonderfully made. I lay special stress upon that fearfulness. The more we know about ourselves, the more terrible we realize we are. It is not too strong to say that. We are terrible beings, in the sense that the capacities of these human souls, of this psychic nature, carry us out into realms of experience, of phenomena, of practice, of influence and even achievement — oh, it is a terrible thing. And we can have experiences that we might call — it is not meant as a judgment or a criticism — "Pentecostal experiences," and I want to know whether that has sprung out of the work of the Cross planted deeply in that strong psychic life, and if not, I repudiate the experience.

The only safe ground of experience is that you are crucified to your own soul, that the Cross has been planted in the centre of all your psychic capabilities. Romans 6 is essential to Romans 8. Experience and authority must be tested by the same instrument, by the same means. You speak with authority, you make a declaration, you affirm this: now I want to know whether that is the strength of your conviction or whether it springs out of experience which is the fruit of your being a crucified man. The strength of affirmation, the claim to know something, must be tested, and I want to look behind the authority and behind the experience, and say, Am I dealing with a really crucified man or woman? Does that man, that woman, know the Cross really and truly over against the natural life, the soul life: strength of mind, strength of will, strength of emotion. The test of everything is the Cross. That is the negative side, I know, but it is important that we should recognize once for all that in the Cross we have been cut off from that realm.

Now the subjective side means that God is going to work back to His zero point, so far as all we are by nature is concerned. The objective side is that we have accepted that once for all. Objectively we have said, Christ is my only hope! Christ is my only righteousness! Christ and Christ only is my salvation! There is none in myself! Well, objectively, we are accepted on that ground of what He is for us unto God by His Cross. But then the Holy Spirit begins on that ground to deal with us and to work backward to God's zero point in the Cross, and the experience of every believer who is truly governed of the Holy Spirit is this, that the longer they go on and the further they go with the Lord, the further they go back. Their advance in one sense is balanced by retreat in another. That is to say, all the time they realize that they are being brought more and more to zero, that their own powers consciously count for less and less. To put that positively, they are more and more dependent upon the Lord for everything. But that is simply bringing us back to our starting point. The Holy Spirit has not come to undercut our position, our acceptance, but to make it good in our experience, that what is true in Christ shall be true in us, that the Lamb's wife, as we have put it, shall be conformed to the Lamb, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

We have been on the negative side almost entirely, but we shall not get anywhere until that is settled. It is an almost appalling thing to contemplate the situation today. In the light of that, if that is true, we might despair if we look out. Nevertheless, beloved, the test will come to every life sooner or later. It will come to the whole of Christendom sooner or later, and the test will come on this very ground. Questions will arise all around. After all, what has been the proportion of our spiritual effectiveness and fruitfulness? After all, what is going to stand through all the test? Questions will arise in all directions as to the genuineness and reality of the work of God, the knowledge which believers have. There must come, whether the Church goes into the great tribulation or not — we will not discuss that — but there must come in the very ordering of God a situation where the foundations of God's people are tested, the foundation of their knowledge of Him. Thus it becomes a critical matter as to the nature of their knowledge of the Lord, whether really it is personal, experimental knowledge or whether it is information. The work in which they have been engaged, what has it been? Has it really been a case of God doing the work, or a thousand and one self-propagated things entered upon in the Name of the Lord? It is going to be tested. It must be tested. Every man's work shall be tried. That is the declaration of God's Word — *"the fire... shall prove each man's work of what sort it is."*

The Need for a Positive Attitude to our High Calling

Well now, if that is true, I think we can contemplate rather an appalling result over a very large area. And I would say this to you, that we must rule out all that sinister, evil, half-formed suggestion of the optional about these things. We must take positive ground. The Lord Jesus always sought to bring His disciples on to positive ground. *"If any man love me, he will keep my commandments."* — *"If any man love me..."* In saying that, He was only saying in other words, "If a man really does not love, he will be looking round for second lines, for ways out. If a man really does not love Me, he will be saying, 'Is it really necessary?' If a man love Me, he will not say, 'Is it necessary?' He will say, 'Has the Lord said it? Is that the Lord's mind? Has the Lord given any indication that that is what He would desire?' The one who loves will always be found taking the positive line; not, 'Must I? Is it necessary? Cannot I get through without that?'"

Now, that is the test. And the point for us is this. Not to be like those who say, "Well, there are so many multitudes of good Christian people who do not accept it: they know the Lord; they are blessed, they are used"; and all the rest of it. Do not come on to that ground. That is not good enough, beloved. There were two-and-a-half tribes of Israel who refused to go over Jordan, who said, *"Bring us not over this Jordan"*, although the Lord's mind had been made perfectly clear that all Israel should go over Jordan. Well, they got blessing; they had

pastures at the other side of Jordan. Yes, they had a fair position. Do not be mistaken. Do not think that if you are not going right on with the revealed thought of God, He is going to be spiteful. That is not God. No, He will give you a good time. But the two-and-a-half tribes lost in the end. They were the first to go into captivity. They were out of the full will of God; and that means something. We have to come on to positive ground. *"If any man love me..."* Is this God's full thought, then love for the Lord Himself means that I can accept nothing less. I will go all the way. My attitude for one dearly loved is, How much can I do? How far has that one expressed a thought to which I can conform? That is the response of love. That is the positive ground. And I say to you that you can have something less than this if you like, and you can have blessing; but it is what ultimately ranks that matters, is it not?

Chapter 7 - The Subjective Work of the Cross

Reading: *Revelation 5:1-14; 7:9-17.*

The Negative and Positive Aspects

(a) The Negative Aspect

We are concerned with the matter of spiritual life, spiritual growth, spiritual progress. We are deeply distressed because of the smallness, the limitation, the weakness of so many children of God after so long a time. We are troubled because converts do not move on and believers do not grow, and so few come to the place where they are able to take responsibility and you have no need to be keeping a "weather eye" on them all the time. Why do we have to write off so much of our life, as being very full and yet so empty? The Lord has shown us why and the solution to the problem is found in the Cross.

If spiritual growth is arrested or retarded, you can usually trace in the case concerned some strength of natural life. It does not always appear as strength, mark you. Its appearance is sometimes as of weakness. It is not always the aggressive one who is marked by strength. Sometimes our strength is in our passivity, in our unwillingness to take risks. We call that, of course, being very humble, being meek, docile. Oh, but sometimes that is the thing the Lord has to hammer at. That is the passive side. On the other side, there is the more active and aggressive kind. But usually you can find somewhere a strength of some sort which is the strength of nature, which is not yielding or letting go to the Lord. The Lord has to deal with us according to what we are. In those people who are all too ready to be aggressive and take responsibility and do things, the Lord has to deal with them along one line, in taking away all that in which their soul glories. On the other side, He has to challenge to do, challenge to accept responsibility. He deals with us according to how He finds us. But the key to the matter is whether we, in what we are by nature whatever that may be, will really yield to the Cross; for the Cross is many-sided, and as many-sided as there are temperaments amongst men.

The Cross is applied according to every man's make-up. What would be the Cross to me would never be the Cross to you, and the Cross may mean something different for every one of us. But it is universal. That is the point — central and universal. It touches us all perhaps in a different way, and it raises questions and issues for each one of us peculiarly. That is *our* challenge of the Cross, and then it is a matter whether we, in what we are, will come and allow the Cross to deal with us. It is no use our saying, "*What shall this man do?*" The Lord will at once answer, "*What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.*" There is a personal, individual, shall I say, private application of the Cross to every one of us, and our spiritual growth depends entirely upon the Cross doing its work in us, and our response to it personally.

There are a good many other matters which we could not cover if we tried to. For instance, we do not know God's purpose for each life. God's purpose touches each one in a different way. There is that sovereign choice of God which has a place for each one of us, a peculiar work for each of us to do. While it is related, a part of the whole, nevertheless it is a facet of that great jewel, the City of God, and God has to have us dealt with and responsive to Him in a particular way, in which someone else has no place, and we, in the Cross, have particular dealings with the Lord because of something which is peculiar to us in the Divine purpose.

So, you see, it is very necessary that we should recognize that this cannot be taken as a kind of a general thing. It has to become peculiar to each one of us. Oh, beloved, do believe that this is not just teaching, or doctrine. It is of *very* great importance. But I would beg you not to accept it merely because I am saying it and emphasizing it, nor even because I tell you that so far as some of us are concerned, it is a proved thing. I would ask you for one

thing only, namely, not to close your heart to it, not to say, "That is a teaching!" but just to ask the Lord, "Is this right?", taking an attitude simply and honestly before the Lord, even should you feel it is not true, and so leaving room for the possibility that the prejudice may, after all, spring from yourself, from something in your constitution or in your upbringing.

Will you go to the Lord with this and say, "Lord I do not see, it is difficult for me to believe it; but, if it is true, then, Lord, I am open to the truth, and I want You to take me definitely in hand on the ground of the truth". There is not one of us, I am sure, who wants to stand in the presence of the Lord later on, and for the Lord to say, "My child, I would have led you into something very much fuller if only you had given Me the chance". Will you take a very honest and open-hearted attitude toward the Lord in the matter?

That is the negative side. Of course, the things included in that are legion. But it does mean this on all matters, that you and I have no prejudices, no pre-conceptions that we have not reached a position on any point where we have come to finality. It means that we may yet have to change our entire position on some matters. Things about which we are most certainly convinced may have to go yet. We must recognize God's sovereign dealings with us. There are some of us who at one time in our lives believed with all our being that a certain thing was God's will, and God's directive will at that, and we have come at length by the deepest experience, and experience which has issued in the greatest values, to have to say, "That was only God's permissive will, and God never meant it as anything like His end." It was only a step towards something else, and the thing involved was to us tremendous. We would have staked our lives upon it.

But we have had to change our entire attitude to that, and put it in a secondary place in the will of God, and see that God was dealing with us where He found us, and leading us step by step, and each step called for adjustment and a change. Oh, the purpose of God was the same all the way through, but His methods with us had to vary, and He has very graciously, in His sovereignty, used these imperfect stages and steps to teach us much. I think we should say today that our position now is so much the stronger because it represents such a change. Oh, beloved, we have to keep that Cross where it preserves an open way which makes it yet possible for new things to happen, without our so clinging to our position that God cannot do revolutionary things in us still. The Cross is fundamental to all that God wants to do, and when the Lord is going to do a new thing, the Cross is going to deal with some fresh obstruction. Well now, that is on the negative side.

The positive side of this arises when you see the object of the Cross in God's mind. Why the Cross, you ask. Well, negatively the Cross is to get this incapacitated man out of the way; for, while he is so injured and incapacitated, he is yet a very active and very energetic and very positive factor. If only he were so crippled that he could do nothing, it would be an easy matter. But it is not so. He is the most active, energetic cripple, bothering everything and everybody. But he has to be got out of the way for God's positive object.

(b) The Positive Aspect

What is God's positive side of the Cross? It is that the Cross shall make room for a man who is capable, who has all the capacities, capabilities and faculties for Divine things: and it is just at that point that the whole meaning and value of the Holy Spirit comes in. It is not possible for us to know the Holy Spirit until the Cross has become a reality. You never, in type or in antitype, reach the anointing until you have come to the slaying. Thus Paul says this strong word to the Galatians: Christ was made a curse for us. *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith"* (Gal. 3:13-14). He was made a curse for us that we might receive the promise of the Spirit. That is borne out in the New Testament in every instance of receiving the Spirit.

The Cross and the Spirit

Take one instance, Acts 19:1-5. Paul, having passed through certain regions, came to Ephesus, and found there certain disciples and said unto them, *"Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?"* evidently perplexed because of an anomaly, because of something which was abnormal or sub-normal, something freakish. Here were people who were calling themselves Christians and disciples of the Lord Jesus, and he did not discern there the marks of their having received the Spirit. This, thought he, is strange, this is extraordinary, because if they are Christians in the real, genuine, true sense, they cannot be without the Holy Spirit, they must have received the Holy Spirit. But here is a little group of people gathering together as Christians, and yet the tokens of their having received the Spirit are not there: and perplexed, he said, *"Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?"* You know their reply, *"We did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given."* Then in what Paul next says he goes right to the heart of things. *"Into what then were ye baptized?"* What has that to do with it? They might have answered: what is the relationship between receiving the Spirit and being baptized? If baptism is a testimony to our death and burial and resurrection in Christ, then that is the foundation of receiving the Spirit and Paul had put his finger upon the whole situation. In reply to his question, they had said they had been baptized into John's baptism. Ah! so that is it. Well, he explained to them the difference between John's baptism and being baptized into Christ and then they were baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus, and when Paul had laid his hands upon them they received the Holy Spirit. The two things go together always — the Cross and the Spirit.

The Cross in its negative side is to get rid of that old cursed creation which can never receive the Spirit. Remember that! Anything which lies under a curse can never receive the Spirit of God, and you have to get it out of the way. What will you do with a cursed thing? You will put it to death and bury it. That which has no curse then comes into view and the Spirit comes upon that.

The Nature of the New Creation — The Joining of the Holy Spirit with the New-born Spirit of Man

The positive side of the Cross is the coming in of the Holy Spirit to what is born again, the newborn spirit of a believer, and the joining of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man sets forth a new type of being such as never has been in the creation before. Oh, yes, in the Old Testament there were comings upon and workings within by the Holy Spirit, but the joining of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man had never taken place before. That is what Adam missed and the race in Adam lost and could never recover because of the curse. There is a new creation in Christ Jesus and the new creation is the joining of the Holy Spirit with the born anew spirit of man.

Now you have the Holy Spirit in and upon the spirit of man as the Spirit of life, and that Spirit of life means that in the inward man we are alive unto God. We know what it means to be alive unto things, to be alive unto God. It is something very active: alive in consciousness, alive in every way unto God. It is something quite new, is this aliveness unto God. Oh, it is a blessed thing! I know this is very elementary; but it is a very blessed thing to be alive unto God, to know that you are alive unto God. You see, this is altogether different from a traditional relationship with God, a doctrinal relationship with God, the relationship of a system to God. This is our personal, inward, blessed possession, to be alive unto God. Well, I think it is unnecessary for me to labour that. I hope you know really what it is to be alive unto God within, through the Spirit of life.

The Holy Spirit Brings New Faculties

But that life, that Spirit of life, means that there has been brought by the Holy Spirit into our spirit a new spiritual capacity, new spiritual faculties; that whereas in our natural state

we could not, because we were incapacitated, now we can know the things of the Spirit of God. We can receive the things of the Spirit of God: we can move, intelligently and understandingly, in a realm which was closed; and the difference is very great indeed. But it is a very — I was going to say — subtle difference. Let me illustrate. There was a time when we did great things with our Bibles. We read Romans, and no one in all the world could have known Romans 6, so far as the chapter and wording was concerned, better than we did. And we read Ephesians and knew it; and we could preach on Romans 6 and on Ephesians, and give the most splendid interpretation and the most wonderful Bible analysis on the blackboard. We could say that the Church is not an organization but an organism. We could use all that phraseology. Yet with regard to Romans 6, when we were baptized we had truly testified to the fact that we were being buried with Christ, and the day came, beloved, when in very truth we met our Passover, our feast of unleavened bread, our smiting by the Cross of this natural life. We came, under the hand of God, to a very real experience and crisis of the Cross, and went through this, not just as sinners, but as Christians and preachers, ministers and workers, organizers. Something happened, a desperate and terrible thing happened. It was death indeed.

But that was followed by a new knowing of the Lord, a new working of the Spirit, a release of the Spirit, a coming out into a life under the anointing, under an open heaven, and not only we, but everybody else, recognized that Romans 6 was something other than just teaching when we now spoke of it. What that "other" was it would be difficult to define. Ephesians too was different. Again, what the difference was, it would be very difficult to say. It was certainly not in the language, certainly not in the letter, certainly not in the doctrine; but there was meaning, there was power, something had happened. Before we could still preach Romans 6 and contradict it, and in the same way we could preach Ephesians and speak of the heavenly Church being an organism, and yet be in an earthly thing, limited and bound. Something happened, and not only were we in resurrection, but grave-clothes went.

I have only said that to reach this point. There is a difference. You may have difficulty in defining it, but it is the difference between death and life; it is the difference between our coming and taking up the Word of God with our natural powers of penetration and interpretation and analysis and presentation, and that revelation of the Holy Ghost in our hearts which lifts us into a new position and gives us an open heaven. It is a tremendous difference, and the Cross is the basis of that. The Holy Spirit brings new faculties, new capacities. They are different, altogether different. Before we were working in the things of God with our heads, now we are in them with our spirits. New faculties and a new power, spiritual power by the Holy Spirit. This is the positive side of the Cross.

So we have to challenge ourselves over this with regard to where we are. If this is not true, if this is only true in a very small degree, if ours is not this inward path which is growing brighter and brighter unto the noonday, why is it? Well, the responsibility cannot be placed at the Lord's door. There is some reason for it and God's answer to every such inquiry is the Cross. That Cross is intended to clear the ground for all that God has to give us, and into which He would lead us. If we are not coming into it, what is the reason? We can only say that somewhere the Cross is not being suffered to do its work. There is a need somewhere for the Cross to do something more.

Now, when I have said all this about the subjective application of the Cross, the Cross as a power, the Cross as an instrument, the Cross as a working thing in our experience, I must remind you that this has nothing to do with our acceptance, with our standing, with our position. That is assured to faith when we receive Christ. This is simply the outworking of God's purpose in us. But it is an important side. You cannot divorce these two. The divorcing of these two has resulted in a most deplorable state in Christendom and the end of the story is going to be terribly tragic. For many, the history of Israel is going to be

repeated. They are going to die in the wilderness; that is, they are never going to reach the land of fullness, because Jordan has not been crossed. That does not mean that they are lost eternally; but they have missed all that God intended; they have come short of the fullness of Christ. There is a great deal of work that is going to be burnt up when it is tried by fire, a great deal of Christian profession is going to resolve itself into nothing. It is only what is really of the Spirit of the Lord, produced in us and produced through us, that is going to stand and go through; and that is determined by how much scope the Holy Spirit has; and the scope is determined by how thoroughly the work of the Cross is done in clearing the ground.

The Lord give us grace to receive His word and to be before Him very much that He will have His fullest way in us.

Chapter 8 - The Cross in the Epistles

Reading: *Revelation 5 and 7.*

In this meditation, we are going to look at the Cross in various connections in the New Testament.

When we take up the data which gives us all that we know about the Christians of Apostolic times, that is, the letters of the New Testament, it seems to me that in the main three things meet us.

Three Observations with Regard to the Later Apostolic Times

(i) A Startling Feature

The first thing — and it is a rather startling thing — that meets us is spiritual failure almost everywhere. I say that is a startling thing. This fact strikes us. There is not a letter in the New Testament which is not written to correct something that was wrong, to deal with some fault. All the data that we have about the Christians of Apostolic times brings us in the first place face to face with that, a many-sided and comprehensive faultiness. You may think that is a terrible thing to say: but think again. Before we have finished, we will prove it is so. These letters had to be written because of things going wrong: and, mark you, not only doctrinally wrong. There were undoubtedly some in the churches who did not come under the judgment, who were probably not involved, but the strange thing is that not much is said about them if they were there. What we have in the main is a fairly general statement. The letters were written, not just to some people in the churches who have gone wrong, but to the churches. The majority are the occasion of the letters, not the minority. The minority are mentioned oft-times at the end of the letters. Now that is the first thing. We will come back to that, but it is a very striking thing.

(ii) The Note of Warning

The second thing that meets us is the note of warning, admonition and exhortation, with reference to spiritual growth unto spiritual perfection as a goal. Some of the warnings are very terrible warnings. I am not going through the warnings, but you remember that such a warning as Israel's perishing in the wilderness is used on two different occasions in two different letters. Those Christians of Apostolic times, those wonderful times, needed to be warned by the example of those Israelites whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, to whom God said, "Ye shall not enter", despite their having come out of Egypt. That kind of warning is found. There are many others, some even more severe than that. What of Esau, who, for a mess of pottage, sold his birthright, and found no place of repentance in his father, though he sought it with tears. That is used as a warning to Christians. Everywhere there is warning, admonition and exhortation, to bring home the fact that this state of things is not God's thought, not God's mind, not God's will.

(iii) The Cross as the Remedy and Ground of Appeal

Then the third thing which meets us is the Cross, used as a ground of appeal and pointed to as the instrument of sanctification and victory. Every time, these Christians are brought back to the Cross in some way. The Cross is brought before them and made the basis of appeal and indicated as the means for changing the situation.

Now, these three things stand out very clearly upon even a superficial reading of these letters, which comprise the material by which we are informed of how things were amongst believers in Apostolic times. Well, allowing there may have been, and doubtless were, believers of another kind, they are not spoken of very much, and the prevailing impression we are given of these New Testament Christians is as of believers who were far from perfect, and tumbling about all over the place spiritually, and who were still not only

capable of, but actually involved in sin; for all these letters are written to deal with sin, failure, and matters needing to be righted. Well, no one is going to argue we must on that account accept the situation, nor affirm that the Lord has not provided for another position; no one will argue for sin! Moreover, we are faced with the fact that these letters, while written to deal with sin, were written to point out that this was not God's mind for His people, and also to show how and by what means a different state could be brought about: and that is where the Cross is brought in. We shall not attempt to go through all these letters, but if we take several by way only of indicating, you will see what I mean.

Romans — The Cross and the Christian's Position

The order of the letters as we have them under the sovereign hand of the Holy Spirit is that of spiritual chronology, and you start with Romans, which opens thus:—

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake; among whom are ye also, called Jesus Christ's: to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:1-8).

That is the introduction: *"Called saints..."* Called "Jesus Christ's," these are the people to whom the letter is written. Then, as you read on, it is not long before you begin to come into troubled waters amongst these saints, these who belong to Jesus Christ, and you find yourself involved in a fundamental difficulty and the whole question of righteousness arises. Righteousness: that is a fundamental question; the question of righteousness amongst believers; not righteous practice, not righteous conduct, but something more basic than that, namely, righteous nature, and you are led by the letter to see that those who belong to the Lord Jesus are, to say the least of it, unsettled and not sure about the matter of righteousness, fundamental righteousness.

It is not necessary for me to develop the whole of the subject of the Roman letter, but it is concerned with the Christian's position. That is the point. The most elementary thing, the very first thing about a Christian, the thing which comes before all other things, is a Christian's position before God, the question of his standing, his acceptance, the question of the ground upon which he rests, the question of his relationship with God. Christians here are all over the place on that question, the question of righteousness. It may have arisen subsequent to their faith to which the Apostle refers, but here it is; and does it need any argument to prove that to be a state of things possible to believers at any time? Is it not true, right through history and in our own day, that believers may still be found in a state where this matter is far from being finally settled; where there is still the weakness, the instability, the breakdown, the shame, the unfruitfulness, the inability to bear responsibility, because that thing is still an unsettled thing. Beloved, we find it around us everywhere. But surely it is all wrong for a Christian to be like that? Of course, it is all wrong; but nevertheless it is there. The root of unbelief has not been plucked out of even a child of God. You can be a child of God, you can be called Jesus Christ's, called saints, born again, and still have that root of unbelief in you, which can at any time, even with your dying breath, rob you of the assurance of salvation, and many who have lived a life of devotion to God have died under the cloud of uncertainty in this matter. It is there. We have to take things as we find them: and this is how we find them.

Now, I am not saying that, because we find it so, God would have it so. God has provided a means for dealing with this. But if you and I do not use God's means, then however truly we

may be the Lord's, we shall yet be found living this terribly wobbly life, never going straight on, never being for any length of time sure and dependable. So the Apostle, while he says these things about them as in Christ, called Jesus Christ's, called saints, has to say these things about them in respect of what they are in themselves, and those two things may differ.

How does he deal with the matter? Well he steadily works this whole matter of righteousness right up to Calvary. You reach chapter 6, and there his culminating point is that Christians have to come to exactly the same place as those Jews and those heathen had. What place is that? The Cross! He has searched the world, both the pagan world and the Jewish religious world, and not found inherent righteousness; and then he comes face to face with the problem before us and says, "Neither can we find inherent righteousness in ourselves as Christians." So far as we in ourselves are concerned, we Christians, we are no different from the heathen and from the Jew in the matter of inherent righteousness, and all of us must come to the Cross, and see ourselves, even as Christians, as believers, in ourselves put out of the way. Romans 6 is for believers. Do not forget that. It is for believers as well as for all the rest, and the Apostle brings these Christians to Calvary, as he brings the Jews and as he brings the Gentiles. He brings them all there, and says, "Now, all of us have to recognize that in ourselves there is no inherent righteousness. If you believers in Rome are looking for inherent righteousness in yourselves, you will not find it any more than a heathen would. You have, therefore, to let go yourselves; you have to die, you have to pass out in the Cross of the Lord Jesus." You know how Romans 6 opens. *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" "...we who died!"* When did we die? When did you die? There is a sense in which you never die in yourself, you die only in Christ. That is when you died. Christ's death is your death.

Now this is where the most familiar word comes back to us; for the Cross is brought in here for the establishment of ourselves now; not that we might become children of God, but that as His children we might be established by the Cross. I know we can never become children of God save by the Cross, but that is not the aspect of things here. This letter to the Romans is not sent to unbelievers to get them saved. This is to establish Christians, and the Cross is the means of their establishment, and it has to do with position, our position before God, our standing before God, our acceptance; which is all on the ground of a righteousness which is not ours, into which we come only by once for all repudiating the suggestion that there is any righteousness in us. *"In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing"* is the declaration of a saved man, an apostle, and to look for any good thing in ourselves is to contradict Calvary and undercut the very ground of our standing. We stand only on His righteousness, the righteousness which is of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, the point is this, that here we come upon the sin question. What is the sin question, so far as these Roman believers are concerned? The sin question where they are concerned is that of still looking for a righteousness outside of Christ in themselves by works. That is the sin question. That brings them on to a false ground. That nullifies Calvary. When we really recognize the meaning of Calvary, that Calvary is the righteousness of Another provided for us on the ground of our death in that representative Other, then the sin question has ceased for us. The sin question is a matter of our attitude toward what Calvary means. We are responsible, not for our state, but for our attitude toward Him whom God has made a propitiation for our sins. That is the sin question. In the end all judgment comes down to that point. God is never going to judge any man on the ground of his sins as such. God is going to judge every man on the basis of his attitude toward the Sin-bearer. The question that will be asked will not be, How much did you sin? but rather this, What is your relation to the Lamb of God? That is the basis of everything. Faith in the Lamb of God as our substitute and representative deals with the whole sin question.

You see what is possible to believers, and how believers, right at the very foundation of their Christian life, have to get this matter fully and finally settled, that righteousness will never be found in them inherently. It will only be found in Christ who is in them. The Holy Spirit is very careful always to discriminate between us and Christ in us right on to the end. John, who has much to say about sin and holiness and sanctification, is very careful to say, "*God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*" (1 John 5:11); always a discrimination between what we are and what Christ is. Blessed be God, having Christ in us, we have that which is sinless, perfect, resident within: but we are not that. Only as we abide in Christ shall we not sin. But you and I can at any moment fail to abide in Christ; that is, if I understand aright, we can just step over into ourselves.

1 Corinthians – The Cross and the Christian's Walk

We move to the first letter to the Corinthians and see the Cross in another connection. But mark again the introduction.

"Paul, called an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God... unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus; that in everything ye were enriched in him, in all utterance and all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:1-7).

A wonderful people! Now surely we come to sainthood! What a pity we have to read on; and we shall not move very far before we move into a scene of terrible carnality, carnality expressing itself in a number of ways which make us blush. We do not want to dwell upon that side of things, but we take account of the fact that this is what meets us in those who are called saints, enriched in all things, coming behind in no spiritual gift. How will it be dealt with? What is the matter here?

We have moved on. This is spiritually in advance of Romans. I am not saying the state of things is better, but the phase of things is further on. In Romans it is a matter of position, standing. In Corinthians it is a matter of walk, conduct, spiritual behaviour; and it is all so faulty; and faulty is a weak word for it. It is tragic, it is terrible, and it would be really unbelievable, if we did not know it to be so possible, that we should have to read things which come up in this letter as being true of Christians. But I say we have to take things as we find them, and this is not something which was unique in the case of the Corinthian church. This is the sort of thing which has been true in many other quarters since. There it is, and it is not for us to say that people who do things like this are not born-again people, that they have not been accepted of God by faith in His Son. We must not say that. Who has authority to say that the first letter to the Corinthians, in any particular, was not written to Christians? Well there you are, and the question now before us is that of a believer's walk.

How will the matter be dealt with? Well, by the very same means. The Cross will be brought in, and the great ringing note foundational to this letter is "*Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*" Christ crucified: that is the note, the basis, and the means of dealing with this situation. It is always the same. Believers are still capable of these things, but if there is a true apprehension of the Cross they need not commit them, though they remain capable of them. Capable in themselves of anything — yes; but not following their capabilities if the Cross really has been apprehended. The Cross is not only the means of establishing our position, but it is the means of correcting our walk, governing our walk, and if you and I really do apprehend the fact that, when the Lord Jesus died, we died — and that meant that we not only died to what we call sins, but to self — well, that is the end to such things. We

died to self. If we died to self, what man is going to law against his Christian brother to get his own rights recognized? What man is going out in rivalry with his Christian brother to get the better of him, if he has died to himself? What man will bring another fellow-Christian into shame, under reproach, if he has died to self? What man will come to the Lord's table in an unworthy manner, if he has died to himself? Paul applies that aspect of the Cross to conduct, relationships. You see, it will correct everything. Oh yes, you are still capable of these things, but you will not do them if you really have apprehended your death with Christ.

So the Apostle speaks about the natural man and the carnal man, and says, "That is the ground on which all this is springing up. You are living on natural ground still, and therefore you have all these conditions. Get delivered from your carnal life by means of the Cross, and you will not behave like this." The Cross is the corrective every time; and, beloved, let me say this, that the Cross is a mightily active, potent thing in the hands of the Holy Spirit. It is not just some position which we take. It is not just some teaching, some doctrine, which we accept. If you and I will yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit in the light of the Cross, in the light of our death with and in Christ, and say, "Lord, when you died, I died, and I accept my death; now you make it good," the Holy Spirit will come in and will check us up on our conduct, on our behaviour, attitudes, relationships, talk, criticisms; yes, everything in our life and walk. He will deal with it and He will bring the death of the Cross upon it, and the death of the Cross for us will be a most shameful thing at that moment. We shall feel ashamed that we said that thing, that ever that thing passed our lips, that ever we did that thing, and we will have to get down before God. No one has charged us with it; the Spirit of God has smitten us. The Cross has been laid upon us and we know that we are smitten, and we are as dead until we have dealt with that thing before God. It is a real instrument in the hands of the Holy Ghost is the death of the Lord Jesus to our natural life, to our carnality, something by which we are taught. The Cross is God's rod of training, of discipline, to bring out sonship; not to make us sons, but to bring out sonship, to develop us according to Divine thoughts. Well, that is the Christian's walk.

2 Corinthians – The Cross and Ministry

We pass to the second letter to the Corinthians. We come to a new aspect in the second letter. As we begin to read this, we discover very quickly that we are not out of the first letter yet, but rather in the pangs, the suffering, the sorrow, the soreness of the issue of that first letter. Thank God for godly sorrow which brings us godly comfort: and then, when the Cross has dealt with the walk, dealt with the conduct, dealt with the carnality, the question of ministry will arise.

The second letter, as we know, is the ministers' letter! It tells us what a minister is from the Divine standpoint when the Cross does its work. Moses, the minister of God, is brought very much into view, ministering in the old covenant, declaring the thoughts of God, revealing the Divine mind. That is what a minister is. A minister, this word says, is one who shows forth the Divine thoughts, who manifests the mind of God. When Moses read the law, his face shone, the glory of God was expressed through him as God's servant, God's minister. That, mark you, was under the old covenant, the covenant of signs, the covenant of symbols, of types; yes, and a ministry of death and condemnation: and, says the Apostle, we have another ministry, and ministry is the shining forth of God in the face of Jesus Christ in our hearts. That is what a minister is; and let me put that simply, plainly.

There is no such thing in the New Testament as an official ministry as such. God has never, in this dispensation, appointed officials, as such, to be ministers. The ministry is a matter of a revelation of God in the face of Jesus Christ in the heart shining out, and what constitutes one a minister more than another is the measure of the revelation of Christ in the life; and

we all ought to be ready to give place to that. It must be a revelation of God in your heart, in my heart, that constitutes us God's ministers.

Now, you see, the Apostle is saying that it is the Cross that constitutes ministry and makes ministers.

"The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again. Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more. Wherefore if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God" (2 Cor. 5:14-18).

In what context does the Apostle say all that? That has usually been taken as a text for Gospel addresses. It may be very good, but that is not the Apostle's context. See how this letter opens. See the strain that runs through these early chapters. These people have been calling into question his apostleship, his ministry, his right, his position. They have been saying all sorts of things disparagingly of him to try to set him at nought, to put him behind other apostles. He refers to some of these things. We hear him say, *The Gospel which was "preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yea and nay."* Why does he say that? Because they had been saying, "He is a yea and nay man; we cannot rely on him. He says a thing and does not do it." Thus they were setting him at nought. And there are many little things here which indicate that they were questioning his ministry, his apostleship, his credentials: and so he says, "Because we all died, we do not know one another after the flesh. You are judging on a wrong basis altogether. The whole question of ministry is not what you may find of human faults in me. The whole question of ministry is, Has God shone into my heart? Is there a ministration of Christ going from me? Have your eyes come to rest upon what I am in myself with all my faults, or are you looking for Christ? If you take that lower ground, you know me after the flesh." On that ground we deny the Cross. We can all take one or other of these attitudes and positions over servants of God. We can all the time be criticizing their natural defects and faults, focusing upon what we see them to be humanly and naturally. If we do that — knowing them after the flesh — well, we do not give a chance to what is of God. Or we can take the other position. "Yes, it is quite true he is a very frail, faulty, imperfect man, but I choose rather to let the Cross in between what he is naturally and what he is spiritually, and I look to see if he has something of the Lord. If he has, that is the thing I focus upon." That is the position in 2 Corinthians, the Cross coming in to deal with the matter of ministry.

First of all, so far as the Corinthians were concerned, it had to make a way for what was of Christ in revelation, and, so far as Paul was concerned, it was to mean a glorious in-shining of Christ.

We are on the heavenly ground and on this heavenly ground we have an open heaven. The credentials of ministry are the shining of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ in our heart, and anybody who has that can be a minister; and anybody who has not that has no right to call himself a minister. The Cross must strike at all ideas of ministry which are merely professional, which are anything other than spiritual. Spiritual gifts, spiritual revelation, spiritual knowledge, spiritual resources, spiritual riches, these alone constitute us ministers.

Galatians — The Cross and Spiritual Fullness

I will just remind you that, as you go on in these letters, you come next to Galatians, and then to Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, and you are simply taking up the Cross in its relationships to different aspects of things, to get things right, to get things into their right realm. You are moving on all the time. First, position was dealt with, then walk, and after that ministry; and then when you get to Galatians, the question before you is, How shall we

reach spiritual fullness? The trouble with the Galatians was that they had stopped short. *"Ye were running well; who did hinder you...?"* They had stopped short and not gone through to the end. It is a question of fullness, and you know what a place the Cross has in Galatians. Oh, in chapter after chapter, the Cross is brought in. *"I have been crucified with Christ."* Why have I stopped going right on? Because somehow I have come up again from the dead. *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I, but Christ."* The great objective is Christ.

"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). Why have I not gone on? Because the Cross has been nullified in the matter of the world. So the Cross comes in all the time to clear the way for going on to fullness, to finality. That is Galatians — not stopping short of anything of all that God intended.

Ephesians — The Cross and the Eternal Purpose

Ephesians takes you to God's great eternal purpose, and now it is a matter of the corporate life. How shall we know the great, collective, corporate purpose of God from before the foundation of the world, issuing from those Divine counsels in eternity past? How? It will be by the Cross; the eyes of our hearts being enlightened through the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

Philippians — The Cross and the Fellowship of Saints

Philippians: — yes, now we are in the Church. It is no longer just an individual or personal matter as it has been in Romans and in Corinthians. Now it is a collective matter, and when you come into the Church then the matter of fellowship arises. It is not long before the matter of fellowship arises between Christians, and Euodia and Syntyche get at cross purposes. How are you going to look after fellowship, correct discord among Christians in the same assembly?

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8).

Let the Cross deal with this matter of mind, which in some form of expression has come in to interrupt and injure this fellowship. Your "mindedness" has to be dealt with. The same principle holds all the way along. So Colossians takes it up in another way.

Sufficient has been said to point out that there is not a point in the Christian life, walk, service or ministry, in the fellowship of the saints, in the purpose of God: there is not a phase but what the Cross needs to be there all the time. The Cross deals with everything that can arise in Christian history and experience to spoil God's thoughts and intentions. Oh, how we need to say, "Jesus, keep me near the Cross!" The Cross is the corrective, the remedy, for what may arise still among Christians. We know only too well these things do still arise amongst Christians, all these marks of immaturity. How shall the matter be dealt with in us and in things, wheresoever we find them like this? Well, there is only one means, namely, the subjective operation of the Cross. Having got the objective side settled once for all, we must allow the Holy Spirit to use the Cross as an instrument to govern us from day to day.

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