Charles Andrew

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V09 Outline of Mark's Gospel and Other Ministry

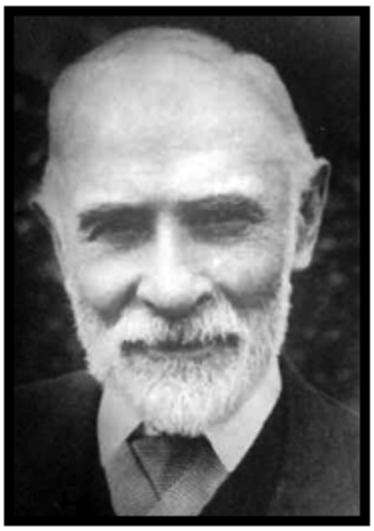
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MARK 1

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CAC We have been seeing in the book of Numbers what an important place the service of God has. We have been considering the place and ordering of the levites, the appointment of their service, the cities they dwelt in, and the universal distribution of the levitical character of things among the people of God. It was thought well that we might consider the One who is the true Servant; that we might engage ourselves for a little time with Him and the character of His service. One feels assured that nothing is acceptable service to God that is not after the pattern of Christ. God, having brought in what is for His full delight, cannot possibly accept anything of a different order.

It is very touching to see that all is presented to us as glad tidings — not in the way of demand — but as glad tidings designed to have a very happy effect on all who read it. None of the other evangelists begin their gospel with "the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God", but Mark is so full of the happy character of it, and it so possesses him, that he bursts out with it in the first sentence. "Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God". He plunges at once into the very heart of what is before him. It is as much as to say, 'Every word I have to utter about Him is "glad tidings"'. You feel at once you are in the presence of what is of God, and it is brought in in perfection, He is God's anointed Son. Mark counts on its being a source of real gladness to contemplate Him and to consider how He moved, how He acted, how He spoke. We can see that what Mark wrote is designed to have a very happy effect upon those who read it.

Ques What is the distinction between this and Romans 1: 1? It is the gospel of God there.

CAC Yes, it is "concerning his Son", and He is declared to be Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead. What Mark has before him is the blessed way in which the Lord came in and moved through this world in service. This is the gospel for saints, the gospel or glad tidings for any who fear God: it is the presentation of that blessed One, the way in which He comes in and moves through this world, delighting God in every way and serving man in every way.

Two Old Testament prophets are cited, Malachi and Isaiah, as showing how He was heralded by John. His messenger precedes Him; all must be suitably prepared, so that He may not be hindered. His way is really Jehovah's way. In the desert there is to be "a highway for our God". How important the

preparation of His ways is! His way is prepared. The idea of preparing the way is that He must not be hindered from a plain course, He is coming to serve and He must not be hindered; so a voice cries, "All flesh is grass". That is the preparation of His way. We get one man out of the way altogether; *all* flesh is grass, not some flesh but all flesh. What a preparation of His way! There is nothing to hinder Him then.

Ques Is that why baptism is introduced so soon?

CAC I thought so. From the messenger we may learn the state of man, the one who says, "All flesh is grass". That voice comes out in preaching baptism and repentance for the remission of sins. They could publicly take the ground of repentance. The Jews were accustomed to baptise proselytes, but now every one must take entirely new ground; there is no escape. The glad tidings are all concerning the second Man. Speaking morally, it is impossible for God to have two men before Him of different orders. The first man and second Man cannot both be for God's pleasure because they are of different orders, so John's mission is essential that all the pretensions of man after the flesh should go down into death. I think John came definitely with that mission to prepare the way of Jehovah and to make in the desert a highway for our God. God wants a highway; He says, I must have everything cleared out of My way. It is not a by-road, but a highway that is secured by the pretensions of man being set aside. John's testimony is a wilderness testimony. His whole character and appearance, what he said and did, showed that there was nothing here for God apart from the attitude of repentance. If man takes up an attitude of repentance there is a highway for God.

Ques Do his food and raiment bring out the wilderness side?

CAC I thought so. His raiment and food are suited to wilderness conditions. The Lord spoke of him as not wearing delicate raiment, He contrasts him with "those who wear delicate things", who "are in the houses of kings", Matthew 11: 8. They are making themselves comfortable and luxurious in the world, but John was not like that at all. John's was a wilderness testimony and his raiment and food were in keeping with this. There is a severity about John, a severity of separation and Nazariteship; he walked apart from all the resources of man. The camel's hair garment speaks of separation; the leathern girdle of a certain severity of restraint on himself, restraint upon nature. His food was clean; locusts are among clean creatures; they have legs above their feet. And wild honey would be honey out of the rock. Nothing is prepared by man, but they are things of a distinctive character found in the wilderness by God's ordering. John is independent of man altogether. "A man sent from God, his name John". If God sends a man it is to clear away every obstacle, that there

may be a highway for Himself, so that His anointed Son may come in and fill up His blessed life of service for God and man.

Ques Would verse 5 be anything like going forth without the camp?

CAC It is that principle. Judaea and Jerusalem were not the places now where God's favour was known; it is a wilderness position. It was said of old, "In Judah is God known ... in Salem also is his tabernacle"; but it is not so now, it is the wilderness. They must go out away from what had status even according to God — all that has to be given up. It is the giving up of everything that one naturally looks to, and going out into the wilderness to find only a voice. John seems to hasten to hide himself behind the One who was coming and the great service which He would render. John was the greatest servant. The Lord says of him that there was no greater born of women, yet he hides himself behind Another.

Ques Should that be true of every servant?

CAC I think so. John is a beautiful example of a true servant. He says, "He must increase, but I must decrease"; that is a fine model for a servant. "John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true". That is a fine testimonial for a servant. It is a great test. So here he says so beautifully, "There comes he that is mightier than I after me, the thong of whose sandals I am not fit to stoop down and unloose", verse 7. All that God was, was to be manifested in the service of that blessed One; it was God's way, but all to be brought out in that blessed One as Man. God will have His way; He has set aside the first man and his ways, and He has brought in His own Man who will secure things according to His own heart and delight. All that is very good news to people who fear God.

Rem He baptises with the Holy Spirit.

CAC Yes, His service transcends John's altogether. John says in verse 8, "I indeed have baptised you with water, but *he* shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit". That is the great service of the Son of God.

Ques Do we get the difference between the two baptisms in Acts 19?

CAC Yes, it is very plain that they knew John's baptism but not the baptism of Jesus Christ the Son of God. I think John's baptism is, in figure, the setting aside of the pretensions of man; and Christian baptism is the burial, typically, of that man. If he is buried he is off the scene. Then the baptism of the Spirit connects one with another world altogether, it connects one with the divine world. The baptism of the Spirit connects one with heaven. It was not until the Lord went to heaven that He baptised with the Holy Spirit: therefore the

baptism of the Holy Spirit connects us with heaven and with Christ as in heaven; that is how the kingdom of God comes in.

Ques Is going out into the wilderness the great test for Christians?

CAC Yes, a great many have not gone out morally from the city, so there is no taking of new ground, and there is more or less of wearing of delicate raiment in king's houses. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Ye reign as kings". You do not find John in a king's house.

Ques Could one go into the wilderness until one had received the Spirit?

CAC I suppose repentance properly understood would bring us to wilderness conditions, because if I judge myself I shall also judge the whole system which I have been living in. Repentance is not merely judging myself but all my associations, like Isaiah who said, "I am a man of unclean lips", but he did not stop there, he went on to say, "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips". He not only judged himself but all his associations. I do not think you have reached repentance fully until you have done that; then you are prepared to go out. Peter says on the day of Pentecost, "Be saved from this perverse generation", not only from yourselves, but from this untoward generation, this perverse or darkened generation. If people wake up to realise that the generation of the world is a darkened generation, and that there is no divine light there, they will soon want to move out. We not only find evil in ourselves, but we find evil in the system around us. It was more testing for a Jew to find that the whole system of things in which man moves and acts is all wrong, because he was accustomed to connect all with God. So now a great many people live in a sort of respectable Christianity which is part and parcel of the world and which is all bound up in the wrong man, not God's Man. To go out in that sense as judging the world and myself as forming part of it is a very necessary preparation, and then we get the highway of God; there is nothing to hinder God then. God says, 'Clear My way, prepare in the wilderness a highway for God'. The beautiful effect of considering the path of the Lord is that you feel you have got a way where you can move with Him safely.

Ques Where you can claim the Lord's support?

CAC Yes. The first thing which the Lord gets when He takes His place with those that fear God is the conscious support of heaven. It is what *He* saw in this gospel, "And straightway going up from the water, he saw the heavens parting asunder, and the Spirit, as a dove, descending upon him". "Harmless as doves", it is gentle, dove-like. It is what *He* saw. Then in the next verse it is what *He* heard, "*Thou* art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". It

is addressed to Himself here, not to others; it is what He saw and heard Himself. It is very beautiful to see that.

Ques What is the thought of being baptised with the Holy Spirit? Is it receiving the Spirit?

CAC I think there is something more involved in it than that. The word 'baptised' means 'immersed'. What a wonderful thought it is to be immersed with the Holy Spirit. We have known what it is to be immersed in the flesh, so that the flesh filled and surrounded us, and that was the sphere in which we lived, moved, and had our being. But it is said of the Lord that He baptises with the Holy Spirit; He takes up His saints and plunges them into a wholly new environment. One would desire greatly to understand more the service that the Lord rendered in baptising with the Holy Spirit.

Ques Why does it say that Jesus came from Nazareth to be baptised?

CAC It is very beautiful that Nazareth was His place, not Jerusalem. That is, a despised place was His place, and He only moves out of that place to identify Himself with the divine movement. It is very touching that there could not be a public movement without the Lord identifying Himself with it. There was no occasion for Him to repent or be baptised, no necessity for Him to take that ground, but they took new ground, and it was ground where He loved to be with them in the spirit of what is said in Psalm 119, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts". It is beautiful to see that spiritual movements attract the Lord. As soon as we begin to move spiritually, even if it is as poor sinners giving up our pretensions, as soon as that movement begins, He joins Himself with us, and then heaven confirms Him. It is very wonderful that heaven should come in at that moment, at the moment when He takes His place with that repentant crowd, just there He gets this wonderful approbation of heaven. It is as if the delight of God could not be kept in any longer.

Ques John presented the greatness of His Person?

CAC Yes, he was glad to hide himself behind that Person.

Rem This should make Nazareth very precious to us; the Lord did not move out of Judaea or Bethlehem.

CAC Yes, Nazareth was His own place, and He grew up out of His own place, as the prophet said. He says from heaven, "I am Jesus of Nazareth". He was that still, He never gives it up as His place. The Lord has no place in this world but that of reproach: the Nazarene and the crucified go together. They put on the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth ..". The Lord here saw the heavens parted

asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon Him; it is what He saw, it is not a question of what anybody else saw.

Ques What is the importance of His seeing it?

CAC I think He got this before He began His service: He got the personal evidence of the support of heaven. I suppose that would be an important matter for us all in any little service we take up. If we do not start out with the consciousness of the support of heaven we are likely to be feeble in the service. The Lord sees, not only the heavens parted asunder, but the Spirit as a dove descending upon Him. He sees the character of the power that was coming upon Him in the anointing.

Ques Would you suggest that the character of His service was dove-like?

CAC I thought it indicated the spirit in which the service of that blessed One was to be carried out. The Lord Himself enjoins His disciples that they were to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves". The Spirit says of Him that He was harmless. I have often thought that this verse is very like Isaiah 64: 1: "Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down". It says here that He saw the heavens parting or rent asunder. Then again in that chapter in Isaiah the judgments are mentioned, but in verse 4 it says, "Never have men heard, nor perceived by the ear, nor hath eye seen a God beside thee, who acteth for him that waiteth for him". That truly was the attitude of the Lord; He waited for Him, He waited thirty years, and never moved out in service, He waited for Jehovah. Then the heavens are rent and God manifests Himself as acting for Him. I suppose the thought of God rending the heavens shows what He can be in His blessed power and support to the one who waits for Him.

Ques It is the Father who speaks?

CAC Yes, a voice out of heaven says, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". There is One on earth with the Son's affections in His heart. If service is not taken up in the spirit of sonship, I am sure it becomes servile.

Ques Would you connect this with Isaiah 43?

CAC Yes, it is a Son serving; that is the beautiful thing about it. It is a Son-servant; there was never such a Servant before. Moses was one of the greatest servants in Scripture, and God said he was faithful in all His house, but he was not a son. Now we have One who comes in and serves in all the freedom and affection of a Son. A son would not be checked or turned aside in his service by anything which could come in. He has the support of heaven

behind him, he has the Father's love behind him filling his heart, he has the Spirit of the Son. That is the true character of all service now.

Ques We have to learn to serve that way?

CAC Yes. We see it in all its perfection in Him, "In thee I have found my delight". Everything now is to be for God's delight; it is not just a question of doing one's duty.

Ques Is this service manward?

CAC I think it is. He was Jehovah's servant, and He carried out Jehovah's pleasure in regard to man, but He does it in the affections of sonship. That is the kind of service which He sets going in His own; He gives impulse to that kind of service.

Ques In Matthew the Lord is carried into the wilderness, in Luke He is led, and here He is driven (verse 12). Is there any significance in the difference?

CAC There is a peculiar urgency here that is very striking: it is as if the Spirit were eager, if we may so say, to have His affections tested at once. The Spirit realised that His blessed service could not begin until this testing was over, so there is an urgency about it from that point of view.

We have been seeing how the Lord began His service in the consciousness of the support of heaven and the consciousness of sonship, because it is what He sees and hears Himself that is emphasised here, not what others saw and heard. He enters into the testing in the full consciousness of heaven's support, and of the Father's love resting upon Him. It is a poor thing to be tested from any other standpoint. I think the support of heaven and the consciousness of sonship, the place we have in the love of God, are necessary to stand even the smallest test. In all three synoptic gospels it is put in that way; He is led or carried or driven; there is no voluntary going into testing even with the Lord, it would not be man's place to do that. What we have here is a divine Person in manhood, so all the power of the enemy is met by the power of a Man.

It is a principle in the ways of God that nothing is useful in His service but that which has stood a certain test. It is what comes through the test that God can use; otherwise Satan might say, 'If that man had been tested he would have broken down'. God puts His servants through testing, often quite in secret. Every one who is called to special service is put through the test, and it is what goes through the testing that God can use.

It has often been said that the Lord's temptation was in perfect contrast with Adam's circumstances. It was not a beautiful garden but a wilderness; and not beasts that come up meekly and gently to take their names and character

from Adam, but wild beasts. There were no natural resources there at all, and what there was of creature conditions was adverse and unintelligent. Wild beasts are just the opposite in character to the dove which rested on the Lord. It would indicate that He was entering upon a service in which there was no natural resource at all, and in which there would be no sympathy; you would not look for sympathy in a wild beast. The Lord was entering on a service feeling how uncongenial everything was around: they were all wild beasts around Him. Scripture says, "I am for peace; but when I speak, *they* are for war", Psalm 120: 7. We do not get the detail of the Lord's temptation in Mark, because the Spirit just brings it in as necessary in view of His service. Details are not given here; it is the general character of testing that precedes service. There were no human resources in the wilderness; then Satan seeks to bring something in not of God in the way of relief or escape from such conditions. The wild beasts would indicate that what was there of creature character was unintelligent and adverse. All the testing was to bring out that nothing could cripple that blessed One, He was incorruptible. Satan had not a word to say, he was driven from the field. There was a full testing but it did not go on indefinitely: it had its term, forty days, and the Lord is looked at then as in the condition when support is needed. He is not independent of the support of heaven, so at the end of forty days we are told that angels ministered to Him. The support of heaven had waited forty days. It is a measured period. All our testings are measured, they do not go on interminably; the succour from heaven comes in just when it is needed in every testing. Paul was greatly tested by all the exercises he went through about the Corinthians, but at the end of forty days, so to speak, he says, "God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus". Titus was the angel to minister to him. If we thought Satan was going to be let loose on us without limit we should give in, but there are always time limits to every testing. Whatever the nature of the testing it is strictly and divinely limited. There is a completeness about the forty days. In Luke's gospel it says, "When the devil had completed every temptation"; Satan had not another word to say. Forty is a number that seems to speak in Scripture of full testing; forty years in the wilderness was a full testing. In the case of the blessed Lord there was full testing, but nothing could cripple Him; Satan's object in all testing is to cripple us for the service of God. If a servant can be seduced from the path of obedience and dependence he is crippled; if he turns to human resources and takes a natural way of escape from his difficulties and testing, he is crippled for the service of God. Luke tells us the Lord returned in the power of the Spirit; He comes back from the testing with power unimpaired, He has gone through it untouched.

The object of this gospel is that we should be in the good of the kingdom. If we go through this gospel with God we shall understand what the glad tidings are, and what the kingdom of God is in power, so that we are set up entirely for God, just as the blessed Lord was.

Ques Was John's mission over?

CAC Yes. It is rather striking that the Lord waits for a providential indication before He begins His service in this gospel. He does not set John aside, He would not appear as a rival to John; that is a beautiful model for a servant. We are told that when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that He baptised more disciples than John, He withdrew, He would not appear as a rival to John. He waited for a providential indication, the shutting up of John in prison, that the time had come for Him to come out. We know as a fact from John's gospel that He had done miracles before that; His glory could not be hid, it subsisted in His own Person. But here in Mark's gospel it is His path as a Servant, and He waits for John to pass off the scene, for the testimony of His forerunner to terminate, before He appears. It is not God's way to bring one servant in to set aside another. If God has used a man and He brings in another servant, it is to confirm what the first did, not to set him aside. We see that wonderful mark of the true servant in the Lord. Even He, who must have known His superiority to John, would not come out in service until John had finished his course. That was a great contrast to Moses, who began to serve too soon: he felt he had a divine mission, and he thought the children of Israel ought to understand, but he was forty years too soon! In service there is no getting in the way of another servant. Paul desired Apollos to go to Corinth: it was a beautiful unjealous feeling in Paul to wish another servant to go, perhaps a more brilliant man than himself; but Apollos would not go to be a rival to Paul. He says, 'No, I am not going there, they are the kind of people to make me a rival to Paul'. One has known cases of men coming in and setting aside everything that was there for the Lord, but that gets no divine support. A true servant recognises all there is for the Lord and supports it, he never puts himself in rivalry with it. It is the kingdom of God that is before a true servant. The Lord came out full of the kingdom of God: we do not think enough of it. God was absolutely supreme with Him. That is the primary thought in the kingdom of God. It is a realm where God is supreme, and yet His supremacy is not authority exercised judicially, but exercised in the way of fullest blessing for man. The kingdom of God meant that God was coming in, things were not going to be left in the hands of men, but God was coming in Himself to take things up and deal with them for His own glory, and yet for the most wonderful blessing for men, even for sinful men. It is a good question to put to people, 'Do you know anything about the kingdom of God?' "Jesus

came into Galilee preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God", verse 14. The kingdom comes in as good news. One can understand the people following the Lord because of the wonderful character of what was seen in Him: they followed Him to learn what the kingdom of God really was.

Ques Is the kingdom of God objective or subjective?

CAC It is objective at first because, in following Him and seeing His wonderful works and hearing His words, we see what the kingdom of God is. But the object of it is that men may be brought in their affections under the sway of God, caught for Him. That gives the subjective side; there is a result for God, not only men get great blessing, but men are to be caught for God. The Lord said, "Repent and believe in the glad tidings"; the glad tidings are all that is set forth in Himself. Then the great end of the kingdom of God is that men are to be caught for God, so the fishermen are brought in at once, "I will make you ... fishers of men". Men are to be caught by being brought to see what a wonderful God He is, and the wonderful character of His kingdom. If people saw the character of the kingdom they would be caught for God. We see the wonderful character of the gospel record: it is divine intuition that makes the servants of the Lord so often turn to the gospels for subjects of gospel preaching. My idea is that the gospels are the net: the Lord has given us a good net to catch men with. We cannot afford to leave out one of these incidents in the gospels; they bring out the nature and character of the kingdom of God. They show what God is in relation to all the sorrow, need and ruin of man, and how he can be completely delivered so that no influence is left to rule in his heart but the knowledge of God.

One can understand how the crowds followed Jesus from place to place; they wanted to see a little more of this wonderful kingdom. The Lord says, "I will make you ... fishers of men"; that implies that He will give them a net to catch with, and the wonderful incidents that came out in the life of the Lord are like the net. When Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost he had all the truth that came out in the life of the Lord in his soul. "A man approved of God among you": he sums it up in a few words. "Miracles, wonders and signs" — that wonderful life. Peter lets down an unbroken net, and he gets a great catch: he was a fine fisher of men. I am sure that is how God catches men. We get another thought in connection with John; Simon was fishing but John was mending nets. We get there a suggestion of a broken net: that gives you John's ministry. John comes in bringing spiritual material after the net was broken, so that the assembly might at the end of her course still be able to catch men. John is a reserve man, and after the breakdown of public testimony, John comes in to give spiritual material so that things may be

preserved right away to the end. What John gives is imperishable, he comes in and repairs things at the end so that the assembly's witness may be as complete at the end as it was at the beginning.

Ques What is your thought of "I will make"?

CAC That is very important. The Lord says "*Come after me*" and "I will make". We learn to be fishers by following. We were singing just now

> 'Wherever we follow Thee, Lord,
> Admiring, adoring, we see'. (197:2)

In following Him we learn the many sides of the kingdom: we become furnished with divine means to catch men. There are divine means and the Lord never used any other sort; He never appealed to people's natural feelings or minds, but He appealed to their consciences and affections. The Lord says, 'Follow Me and you will become fishers of men'. In this same gospel He ordained twelve "that they might be with him, and that he might send them to preach".

Ques How does John 21 come in?

CAC I think that is a service chapter. It brings out two great characters of service, fishing and feeding. One is the gospel side and the other is the ministry of food in the household. It shows that without the Lord we can catch nothing; they laboured all night but they caught nothing. It is no doubt a dispensational picture, but it does set forth the conditions of service. These men were a good sample of levites, they left everything, they came under a dominant influence, and everyone who serves the Lord must know what it means to come under a divine, dominant influence. They left their business and their natural relationships because another influence came in to dominate their affections. With many men their business is the dominant influence, and then their natural affections; and if anything is left the Lord gets it. That is reversing the whole thing. The Lord should be the dominating influence, and then the natural relationships should be influenced by the dominant influence, and the business comes in for its share in the end. I believe that is the divine order. The three synoptic gospels show how following the Lord would adjust us in regard to all the things that are temporal, but following Him in John's gospel puts us in right relation with the things that are eternal. The Lord is moving there, we see Him as He walked. He is moving into the region of spiritual and eternal things, and those who follow Him in John pass into the region of the spiritual and eternal. But following Him in the other three gospels is connected more with the adjustment of things temporal: business, natural

relationships, taking up the cross, denying self, all is connected with that which is temporal and passing away, and as we follow the Lord we get adjusted in regard to all that.

Ques A levite is not a hired servant?

CAC No, a hired servant serves for wages and gets them. A good deal of service in christendom is like that. If people serve the Lord for wages they will get them, every penny, but that is not the kind of service that the Lord likes. He does not like servants who bargain for what they get: He likes those who go into the vineyard and leave the pay to Him; they come off best after all. The fact is that the compensation in service is so great that it knocks the thought of any future compensation very much into the background.

It strikes one as so marvellous to follow Him and see every hour some new phase of the kingdom of God, to see it set forth livingly in Him and in His service. What a supreme, satisfying portion it must have been! There was wonderful power in the attraction of His Person; one longs to know more of it; we are all tested as to what that power of attraction has become in our souls.

I think the Lord had established Himself in the hearts of these men before; this was not the first time they had seen Him. The incidents in John 1 come before this, and show that the Lord had established Himself in their affection. This is a definite call to service, and I suppose there is that in the case of each one, however little we may have taken account of it and responded to it. I think it is the sense of a definite call that gives one authority. The Lord goes into the synagogue and speaks with authority, there was the consciousness of a definite commission. We are all apt to be too indefinite, and to feel it is left us to do what presents itself or what is pleasant, and we have not sufficient sense of divine appointment as to service. Every levite had his service divinely appointed: they could not do just as they liked.

Then that would shut out all the unclean element. The Lord's presence in the synagogue brought to light the man with an unclean spirit. The unclean spirit is just the contrast with what we are speaking of: it is the contrast to the Holy Spirit. The Lord is introduced as the One who would baptise with the Holy Spirit, and this man is *in* an unclean spirit — the same word — immersed in what is unclean. While he recognised Jesus as the holy One, yet everything about him was in contrast to the holy One of God. He was in the synagogue, too; in the religious sphere there may be what is unclean, but the first wave of the power of the kingdom displaces it. The Lord's first act is to displace what is unclean. The man was in *their* synagogue as well as the man with the withered hand: as if to say that there was room in their system for what was unclean and withered. But there is unsullied purity in the kingdom of God. It is

presented so especially in Mark, "exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them". That is the character of the kingdom in power, white as snow, unsullied purity, the unclean spirit is gone. We have to beware of what works in our spirits. The unclean spirit suggests what works in the spirit of a man. That is the contrast between the unclean spirit and leprosy. A man in an unclean spirit represents what is working in the spirit inwardly, and which is only brought to light by the presence of the Son of God. Leprosy is more what comes out in one's body. Paul said to the Corinthians, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit"; that would be set forth in leprosy; it is what comes out in word and deed, in one's body. But behind that there may be a lot of bitterness of spirit: things work in the spirit which are positively unclean, and perhaps do not come to light at all, but it is all under the eye of the Lord. Paul puts the spirit first when he speaks of our whole spirit, soul and body being preserved blameless. In Hebrews 12, when it is a question of the discipline of God, He is called the Father of spirits. It is a great thing to be cleansed in our spirits. One feels how often things work in one's spirit that no one knows anything about, and yet they are positively unclean. There is something working contrary to the holiness of God and that must be unclean. It seems to me that the power of the kingdom went to the root of things and dispossessed the unclean spirit, the spirit that is not in accord with Jesus. If my spirit is not in accord with Jesus it is characteristically an unclean spirit, and the first wave of the power of the kingdom deals with that. But it is with much exercise to me; perhaps it will tear me — it tore him, but it left him. We cannot get rid of what is unclean without suffering. One would not mind being torn to get rid of every movement of what is unclean in one's spirit. We do not naturally like to be freed in our spirits, but it has struck me much in thinking of this, that the first wave of the power of the Spirit in the kingdom deals with the spirit of a man. What spirit am I of? Is my spirit immersed by the Holy Spirit? I have to confess that I do not know much about it. Here I see a man immersed in an unclean spirit. It is a question of what your spirit is, not what you say or do, but the character of your spirit. In Romans 8 we read, "the Spirit ... bears witness with our spirit". It shows that your spirit is to be a suited companion for the Spirit of God, so that the Spirit of God can talk to your spirit as one friend to another; that is a clean spirit. Is it possible that my spirit can be so purified that the Holy Spirit can talk to my spirit personally? The Spirit witnesses that we are children of God. It is not mere profession.

We are children of God, clean, and marked by this wonderful purity.

If the kingdom starts like this, what will it be in the finish? Mark speaks of the *beginning* of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ we do not read anything about the end!

Ques Is there any significance in the Lord moving out of the synagogue into the house?

CAC One would conclude the synagogue is the place of public profession; and I think in the house we find ourselves in the circle of the brethren. The Lord acted sovereignly and authoritatively in the sphere of profession to deal with what was contrary to the holiness of God, but He acted sympathetically in the circle of the brethren. It was a necessity that the Lord should act sovereignly to dispossess the unclean spirit or we should never find our place in the circle of the brethren. If the Lord did not act sovereignly in the public profession men would remain immersed in an unclean spirit, just the contrary to what obtains in the kingdom of God, where the Lord immerses men by the Holy Spirit. In principle we are either immersed in one or the other.

Service must be altogether in the power of the Spirit. The light of the candlestick is maintained by pure oil: it is the pure candlestick. No doubt Mark answers to the candlestick, and the great thought of the candlestick is purity — pure oil — so that what is unclean must be set aside by divine authority. What marks the Lord's service in the synagogue is authority He speaks and acts with authority; it is the assertion of power to bring about conditions suitable to God. A man is unclean inwardly, that is the first thing. The Lord proposes to set the spirit of a man right.

Ques What is the thought of their telling Him about Peter's wife's mother?

CAC It has an application. We find ourselves in a narrow circle: it seems to be the circle of the brethren, James and John, Simon and Andrew.

Ques Was there sympathy also on the part of the brethren? They tell the Lord about her.

CAC Yes, there was a sympathetic interest on the part of the brethren: there was one there incapacitated for service, and they all felt it. We ought to feel it if a brother or sister is incapacitated for service. It is quite easy to see defects, but to have a sympathetic interest and desire that anyone should be in perfect liberty for holy service is a lovely exercise to be found in the circle of the brethren: it sets the Lord in motion. The Lord waits for suggestions in the house, but He does not wait in the synagogue. We find repeatedly that in the synagogue He acts on His own initiative sovereignly, but in the house He waits for suggestions. What marks this incident is that all the elements that hinder service should be dealt with in sympathetic grace. There is a priestly character about this incident. We are having great instruction about the things that are found in the kingdom. In the kingdom we find divine authority against what is unclean, but there are divine sympathies and priestly grace in regard to

weakness. A great deal of service is hindered, not by an unclean spirit but by fever.

Ques Is fever characterised by restlessness?

CAC That is a prominent symptom. It is an overheated state in which the strength, instead of being expended in useful service, is being burnt up in unprofitable, inward disturbance. The proper thing in the house is that service should be carried on; and however awkward our position, if we are preserved in quietness, we shall be happy. The position of a mother-in-law is not easy in a house: it is admittedly a difficult position, and there is such a thing as saints being placed in positions not easy to fill if they are to avoid friction. If a mother-in-law interferes she makes trouble for herself and all in the house, but the divine way is to be in the spirit of service. However difficult the position, if we are in the spirit of service everything will go happily. The secret of all difficulties is a very simple one: it is that we get out of the spirit of service, and that is abandoning the testimony. The testimony is gone when we get out of the spirit of service.

Ques It was seen in the Lord?

CAC Yes, the testimony was there; and from the point of view of this gospel the testimony is connected with service. It is wonderful how things straighten out if we are in the spirit of service. The worst of fever is that it incapacitates for service. The strength, instead of being employed in benefiting others and being happy oneself, is burnt up in inward activities that are unproductive and destructive.

Ques If we enter on the truth of the holiness of God's house, there must be holy conditions?

CAC Yes. If God and our Lord Jesus have their right places, holy conditions would be preserved. If there is not holiness there is something unclean, and that is why the dispossessing of the unclean spirit comes first.

Rem If we are morally defective as to the power of the kingdom, we shall not be prepared for the teaching of the second incident.

CAC Yes, that lies at the base of the testimony. The point of all this instruction is that it may have its place and power in the saints.

Ques Is the wife's mother in right condition at the end of the verse?

CAC Yes, she rises up to serve them: that is the result of the fever being subdued. The brethren speak to the Lord about her and He went up to her and raised her up. The Lord takes her by the hand: that is the expression used

in Hebrews 2 in regard of His priestly grace. If the Lord takes us by the hand, the fever goes. We cannot have fever if that powerful and gracious hand is reached down from the glory of God to take ours. He raises her up: she was prostrate, she lay in a fever, but she is in the right position now. Fever might be an undue occupation with things that could very well be left alone. Some people fill up their time with this, that, and the other, without ever giving it a thought that they are called to serve the Lord in the kingdom of God and to serve the brethren. People have all sorts of objects and considerations that keep them in a restless state. I suppose many things come in which are really fever; a restlessness of spirit which hinders us from serving the brethren, strife, vain glory, murmurings, reasonings all coming of self-importance. Each one must face the exercise with himself and herself. The Lord is to be served and the brethren, but fever hinders the service. The Lord takes hold of us in priestly grace that His deep interest in us may be known in relation to these things which are the evidence of our infirmity. He can reach down His hand from the right hand of God to lift us into superiority to everything that would hinder serving.

Rem Evening has come and the sun has gone down. We have come to the end of the dispensation, but there is still a time of activity for the people of God.

CAC That is like Leviticus 24. The candlestick was still to be attended to and the light maintained though conditions of apostasy were amongst the people. It is beautiful to see here that the Lord's activities result in the securing of a circle of which He is the centre.

Rem He was the centre of attraction, whether in the house or whether when the sun had gone down and the whole city was gathered to Him.

CAC Yes. The Lord would give us a great sense of resource in Himself: all the power of the kingdom of God was there in Himself, whatever the conditions were; and He served one and another to make them vessels of the power of the kingdom.

Ques Should we experience something of that if conditions were right?

CAC Yes. There is no resource in christendom outwardly today, no power to stand against evil, and no power for testimony or the service of God. If the Lord gets a place, if there is a house where He can have a place, there is power there and power that is felt outside. We see what is outside in verse 34. One would like to be attractive to need, one would covet that; not to be attractive to men as having no need, but to be attractive to need. It is what the Lord Himself was. There is about the Lord, in this gospel peculiarly, a

certain hiding of Himself; He will not suffer the demons to speak because they know Him, and He leaves Capernaum where there was great interest; then in the next incident He charges the leper to say nothing to anyone. It shows on the part of the Lord a retiringness and a hiding of Himself. I think we get an important principle in the Lord saying, "Let us go elsewhere into the neighbouring country towns". It was not because the thing was played out with no interest, for the disciples had said, "All seek thee". One might lose the sense of the scope of the service. If we take up the question of testimony it is important to remember how wide is the scope of it.

The Lord indicates to us the secret of power and preservation in service; He rises a great while before day. There are twelve hours in the day; there is a period of service, but if there is to be divine power and leading in that service there must be a rising a great while before day. The burning of incense always went along with the trimming of the lamps: we find the incense here. Is not that the real power of everything on our side? Prayer is the secret of power. The Spirit is definitely the Spirit of grace and supplication — prayer is very much connected with the Spirit.

Ques What is the thought of His going to a desert place to pray?

CAC I think it suggests that there must be a withdrawal from all the influences of the present scene. The result of prayer here seems to be that there is an enlargement of the sphere of testimony. I think it is a warning not to get unduly localised as to the testimony, which is really a universal thought.

The importance of preaching comes in here. The Lord emphasises the preaching; He puts that before the works of power, He was sent forth to preach. One wonders whether we give the preaching its due place in the testimony. The word 'preach' is really 'herald'; it gives the thought of a definite announcement. The position has to be plainly declared on God's part. The Lord carries the brethren with Him; He says, "Let *us* go elsewhere into the neighbouring country towns, that I may preach there also". The house gives the idea that there is a circle of sympathetic interest and then they go forth together. *They* did not preach; the Lord preached, and they went with Him. It is a great privilege to go with any little preaching that may go on now. Paul also desired to carry the sympathies of his brethren in his service.

The effect of preaching is that the leper comes; that is why the preaching goes on. I think the preaching of the kingdom of God awakened desire in the heart of the leper. A leper is one in whom the will of the flesh has become manifest. The leper evidently got through the preaching a great sense of the power of God that was present, but he needed to learn another feature of the kingdom, and that was the very dominant place compassion had. He said to

the Lord, "If thou wilt". It is easier for man to entertain the thought of God's power than of His compassion. It is a great point to reach in one's soul that the character of the kingdom of God is such that every kind of moral need establishes a claim on divine compassion. The leper is an extreme case, he is an excommunicated man, not fit company for God or man. This extreme case brings out the marvellous compassion found in the kingdom of God. There was something in the leper that responded to the preaching. One would expect that, if right conditions are brought about, a divine result would be reached. What God does is not inoperative, so that, if the glad tidings of the kingdom of God are preached and the brethren are in sympathy with it, we shall expect to see lepers come in.

Ques Why does the Lord tell the leper to go to the priest?

CAC It seems to emphasise the thought that he was cleansed in view of the testimony. It brings out what the Lord has come to do in the depths of divine compassion. He had come to touch the leper, and to cleanse him by touching him. It is the compassions of the cross that are brought before us. We never realise how leprous we are until we see what it cost the Lord to bear the judgment of our state.

Rem The note in the margin here is "touch freely, or handle".

CAC That is beautiful; it gives the thought of divine compassions.

It would do us good to ponder deeply and in a prolonged way the sorrow psalms of Christ. Nothing will affect us more deeply than the sorrows of Christ. I suppose it is in that way we get cleansed; the cleansing is not a judicial act but a moral process. I think often people think of the cleansing of the leper as if it were the same as forgiveness of sins. To my mind it is quite different, it is a moral process by which the person is purified from all taint of that terrible disease which had established itself in every part of his being.

Ques The corruptible condition of man?

CAC Yes, the cleansing of the leper intimates the setting up of an incorruptible condition, a condition that corresponds with God. The cleansing comes about by realising the wonderful character of that "I will". You can put into the "I will" all the sorrow psalms of Christ; if you leave any of them out you leave out some element that is bound up in that "I will". It is the compassionate will of Christ to take up the whole question of our corruption and to touch it. What it cost Him to touch it we can only know by what He tells us Himself. If I understood what it cost Him to take up that corruptible condition, and so to deal with it that it might be removed from before God, what a revolution would be effected! I should be cleansed.

MARK 2 AND 3

Mark 2:18-28; Mark 3

CAC The incident from verse 23 of chapter 2 brings into view the Son of man as Lord of the sabbath: He was the One who could give the sabbath its true character according to the mind of God. The Lord adduces this striking instance of how what might be according to legal requirements became subservient to the grace that marked the house of God. An entirely new character of things was present in the midst of Israel in the service of the Lord; and, one might say, it was too great and too energetic to fit in with the system that had been there before.

There was an entirely new kind of divine movement going on as the Lord had pointed out in the previous section: the Bridegroom was there. The Lord was entitled to the affections of His own, and had come in to win those affections in the way of the service of love. I have connected the thought of the Bridegroom with what is said of Israel: "Israel served for a wife", Hosea 12: 12. The Lord came in to serve for a wife, to be the Bridegroom, to win those affections to which He was entitled, and which had never been secured under the legal system. He came in to secure those affections by the service of love, and He was there in the midst of Israel as the Bridegroom. The disciples have the remarkable title of "sons of the bride-chamber", and they understood intuitively the nature of the moment; it was not a time of fasting. As far as we know, the Lord had never told them not to fast, but they understood it was not suitable. We see that in the presence of the Lord the disciples were in perfect liberty, so here they go through the cornfields and eat the corn; they were in perfect liberty, they had the intuitive sense of who was there. They were acting in the liberty that was suitable to the presence of the Lord of the sabbath. Their conduct was challenged, and the Lord had to vindicate it. The cavilling of their adversaries was in regard of what the disciples were doing; and what they were doing was the result of their having come under the influence of the Person who was serving among them. They were thoroughly identified in their sympathies and affections with the character of service going on in Israel: they were absorbed with Him, and going on with what was entirely new. The Jews would have liked to mix the two things, but they were going on with the new. The Lord likes to have us in a state of soul where He can vindicate us and support us; and He can if we have the new garment and new skin for the wine. In principle the disciples had an entirely new garment; they were clothed with His worth. They had no idea of any sort of claim on their side, or of establishing any title in their affection, but they were clothed with His worth and appreciated the wonderful character of the new position

that had come about by His presence here in the service of His love. The great thing for us is to appreciate what has come in in the Person of Christ. Man would have the fast, and be restricted and in bondage, and ignore the wonderful character of the Person who has come in; but the disciples were sons of the bride-chamber, and that is a happy character of the moment. In principle that character spreads over the whole period.

Rem They go on and do not need to vindicate themselves we often do, and justify our doings when challenged. "They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord", Jeremiah 31: 12. The disciples were realising that in His presence.

CAC Yes, and "my people shall be satisfied with my goodness", Jeremiah 31: 14.

Ques What did the thought of Abiathar convey to them?

CAC There was correspondence between David's position and the Lord's. David was in reproach and rejection.

Rem Morally the Pharisee would be like the Edomites who slew all the priests of Jehovah save Abiathar.

Rem "His disciples began to walk on" (verse 23). It is a great moment when we begin to walk on as disciples. They were moving with conscious ease and dignity.

CAC Yes, and *with Him*. It calls forth opposition and criticism. All this is the glad tidings, the unfolding of what is available through the service of Christ. We are instructed in it in order that we may be imbued with the spirit of it, and thus be qualified to carry on in our measure the same kind of service. The Lord loves to identify them with Himself: He says in chapter 1, "Come after me, and I will make you become fishers of men". He says, 'You shall catch men for God'. In the next chapter He speaks to the disciples about a little ship waiting for Him. There was a partnership; they are identified with His movements, all that is suitable to the service. This gospel is the great training ground for service if we want to take up levitical service we must pay great attention to all this gospel. The secret of the whole thing is that, as we are divinely taught, there is a preciousness and sufficiency about Christ that puts everything on a new footing, and sets all those who have to do with it in perfect liberty.

Ques Is it the blessings of the gospel in connection with the kingdom?

CAC Yes, the Lord is showing, in these various instances that come up, how He can meet every kind of condition on the part of men or of His saints. The

wonderful thing is that the kingdom of God should come in that way, by way of the service of grace, by God securing all that is due to Himself and His kingdom in securing all that is good for man. He secures His rights in grace by the service He renders man. How wonderful that God should have taken that way! He comes in to render service to man, and in that way secures all that is due to Himself. If we are prepared to be served and to appreciate the way that divine love has taken in service, everything is made as easy as possible for us.

Ques We qualify for service in seeing how God has served?

CAC My impression is that we are only qualified to serve in the measure in which we have been served. There is divine support on that line; we get supported in service which is after the pattern of Christ's service. There is a good deal of service which is not patterned after the line of Christ's service, and it does not get support, but this character of service gets divine support. I am thinking of the service constantly going on amongst the saints and in a general way. One would feel the preservation of liberty among the saints is a very desirable object of service; and also that joy should be preserved amongst the saints. As sons of the bride-chamber the saints would be marked by the joy of all that is coming in the Bridegroom, and then as following the Lord Jesus there would be perfect liberty. In this closing section the disciples were perfectly free and they avail themselves of what is available. We need to consider how far we are ministering to the joy and liberty of the brethren. We need to know what we are seeking to promote so that we are definitely set to promote spiritual conditions.

Ques What does plucking the ears of corn suggest?

CAC It is a figure of the wealth provided in the kingdom.

Every ear of that harvest had sprung up out of death. It spoke of what was immediately at hand.

We are all tested in innumerable small ways whether we are in the spirit and liberty of service. The spirit of service would correct a good deal that is trying and unsuitable which comes in because of the absence of the spirit of service. If we are set to serve we should not be self-important or touchy or ready to take offence. If I only want to serve, no one can hinder me from getting down to that low place of service, no matter what may be said of me. Nothing can deprive us of the privilege of serving; nothing external to ourselves can rob us of it.

Rem Abiathar got deflected and is dishonoured in the end. We have great warnings.

CAC Yes, that makes us feel intensely the need for more prayer. Anything that stimulates us to more prayer and a greater spirit of dependence and distrust of ourselves is of the greatest divine value. A man with a withered hand could not pluck the ears of corn; he is incapacitated. It is easy for saints to get their hands withered. But there is a divine remedy for every possible condition, and it is very encouraging to be fully convinced of that. If I have a withered hand there is a remedy; and there is a remedy for whatever condition is found among the people of God: it comes in on the line of the service of love.

Ques These maladies come about by lack of prayer and the allowance of feelings against one another?

CAC One feels the softening effect of the Lord's grace as it comes out in the way of service; it has a softening effect. We may note the contrast between the Lord's looking round at the beginning of chapter 3 and at the end. He looks round in the synagogue with anger, distressed at the hardness of their hearts, but at the end of the chapter He looks round in a circuit at those that were sitting round Him, and says, "Behold my mother and my brethren". There is no sympathy in the synagogue, but there is in the house; it is lovely to see that the Lord did secure a circle where all was sympathetic to Himself. It is a terrible thing when the Lord has to withdraw because there is nothing sympathetic with Himself — He withdraws with His disciples; chapter 3: 7. The synagogue would answer very largely to the public profession today, where there is no sympathetic or affectionate appreciation of the Lord at all, and no sense of need. The Lord withdraws Himself from that circle, but before the chapter ends He secures a circle in the house where all is in accord with Himself, and where all are imbued with the spirit of service, all doing the will of God. His brother and sister and mother are all imbued with the spirit of service. There is positive hostility to the Lord in the sphere of profession; it is not only lack of sympathy. I think the Lord departs when things take the character of positive antagonism; He bears with a good deal, but when it comes to that point He withdraws Himself.

Ques And we withdraw in affection to Him. "Come out from the midst of them, and be separated", 2 Corinthians 6: 17.

CAC Yes. We withdraw in order to secure house conditions. The synagogue has become the scene of positive hostility to the Lord, so that He and His disciples withdraw; and then we get house conditions.

Ques Is there any significance in His going to the sea?

CAC It suggests a wider sphere than the synagogue, so we find the scope of service widens out greatly.

Rem The multitude were greatly attracted to Himself.

CAC Where there is the setting forth of Christ you will find response wherever there is need. It is pride that does without Him. A true presentation of Christ is always attractive to need, and one covets to be more attractive to need.

It would help us to take account of the different positions in which the Lord was found in relation to service; each position has its significance and its instruction. In this chapter the Lord is seen in the synagogue, by the sea, on the mountain, and in the house. No doubt each position has what answers to it at the present time. The synagogue sets forth the sphere of public profession, and there was an occasion there for Him to act sovereignly. There was nothing sympathetic in the atmosphere of the synagogue. It is encouraging for us to see that the Lord's service was carried on in conditions very much like what is around us today; it is in the midst of a profession where there was the form of godliness but the power of it denied. There was great correspondence between the circumstances in which the Lord served and those in which we have to serve.

In the synagogue we see a man with an unclean spirit, and another with a withered hand; and then in chapter 6 we find the other synagogue scene of this gospel where they were offended at Him because He was the carpenter, so that He wondered at their unbelief. That is very much the condition of the present day. There is a very great deal of incapacity amongst us, and the Lord meets it sovereignly. He deals with those conditions sovereignly, and that is very much what is going on today. In 2 Timothy we read, "the Lord knoweth them that are his". In the midst of the public profession, characterised by what is spiritually unclean and powerless, and marked by unbelief, the Lord is working sovereignly. The fact that we are here tonight is a proof of that.

Then in verse 7 the Lord withdraws Himself with His disciples to the sea. When positive hostility comes to light it is often an exercise as to how far to go on with people. In 2 Timothy there is much about separating and withdrawing. If there are conditions which do not give the Lord any place, the moment comes when it is right to withdraw from them. The Lord takes account of hostility, and it is a real exercise as to how far to go on with those who show themselves hostile to what is of God.

Ques Would you go a long way with frailty and infirmity?

CAC Yes. The Lord had compassion on the man with the dried-up hand; that man could not pluck the ears of corn. That is largely the state of many truly converted people; there is not the capacity to avail themselves of what is available. There is a large cornfield and the Lord moves through the cornfield

with His disciples, who are in the blessed liberty of His company. They pluck the ears, their hands are not dried up, but there is a man whose hand is dried up and the Lord has compassion on him. The Lord acted morally to bring about conditions suitable to God. If the unclean spirit is dispossessed and the dried-up hand restored, one would expect such who are healed to follow the Lord: they had found that in the Lord that they had never found in the synagogue. They might have gone to it all their lives, but they were never set up there before. This only brought out envy. Those in the synagogue go out and take counsel to destroy Him; but the Lord had secured something for God, He had displaced the unclean spirit, and restored the dried-up hand; there is material secured for the service of God. The unclean spirit cast out is the adjustment of the spirit. When a man's spirit is put right you have the main thing put right; and then the hand is restored, there is spiritual capacity given to appropriate what is available in a spiritual sense, and for service. The man has capacity to feed and serve: there is something secured for God. The Lord is working in the synagogue today; it is a sphere of profession, and it is largely marked by an unclean spirit. A spirit that does not give place to the Holy Spirit is an unclean spirit. Everyone knows that christendom is full of it: it may pass off with a beautiful appearance, but there is a widespread refusal to give place to the Holy Spirit. Whatever refuses to give place to the Holy Spirit is an unclean spirit, and the Lord can dispossess it. The Lord is working sovereignly to dispossess it and, when it is so, instead of an unclean spirit we come to be in the Holy Spirit, and the hand gets its power restored — there is capacity for feeding or serving. It is inconceivable the immense wealth that is available now spiritually; but, if a man's hand is dried up, it is not available for him. The Lord comes in with sovereign action to do these things that there may be something for God: if He had not come in sovereignly there would not be one of us here tonight. The fact that we desire to give place to the Holy Spirit shows that the unclean spirit is dispossessed, and, if we find ability to avail ourselves of the spiritual provision available, the dried-up hand is restored. How precious it is to get a thought of Christ, and to be able to get hold of it in one's affections! There is not much ability for that in the profession around us; in the great religious system the hand is dried up.

We have to learn to withdraw ourselves. The Lord withdrew and that brings Him to the sea, which seems to give a wider scope of service. It goes out in principle to the gentiles — Idumea and beyond Jordan. In principle it is a very wide scope of service. The Lord withdraws from the synagogue, and carries with Him what He has secured for God. He finds Himself in a wider sphere of service altogether, and now the great instruction is that He calls the disciples into partnership with Himself. He speaks to the disciples in order that a little

ship should wait upon Him on account of the crowd (verse 9) because the crowd pressed on Him. This stands in relation to the extended scope of service opened up; that is, the greater the crowd the more danger there is of the crowd pressing upon one.

Ques What about the little ship?

CAC I think it is in contrast with the great crowd. The crowd pressing upon Him would surely suggest the danger of the influence of the crowd acting on the servant. The servant is to influence the crowd and not be influenced by the crowd, so the Lord requires a little ship that He might be apart from the crowd and yet serve them. It is important to remember that in relation to the wide scope of service set before us. People tell us we are straitened in service, but we must not notice that! We have the biggest scope of service possible, "every creature under heaven". We could not have a bigger scope than that. The thing is that the pressure of the crowd would influence one; this passage suggests the danger of being influenced by the crowd and the way to escape is to keep in the little ship. It is illustrated again and again. Peter in Acts 3 had a very great sphere of service, but he says, 'Do not look on us, as if we could do anything'. He gets out of sight behind the name of Jesus; in principle he has his little ship. It is the same with Barnabas and Paul in Acts 14; the crowd would have worshipped them, but they get into their little ship at once.

There is a kind of moral order in this chapter. If there is anything in the profession to be for God we are to take account of it first. There was the synagogue of that day which was professedly for God: we have to do with a sphere of things which is professedly for God, and we have to take account of that first. No one can serve rightly unless he takes account of the sphere of profession; we have to find out the kind of influences that are there. Nothing will remedy conditions there except the sovereign power of God. The Lord acts sovereignly. Paul laboured for the elect to get something out of the synagogue for God.

Then you see we have a wider scope of service suggested by the sea, which indicates that men are in the view of God. The Lord says, "I will make you to become fishers of men". The sea brings in the thought that men are to be caught for God. It is a big sphere of service, but the important thing is that the servant himself is not to be influenced by those he serves. He brings a divine influence to bear on them, but he does not allow them to press on him — he is not influenced by them. Every true servant must face this exercise and know what it is to have a little ship. The Lord is in a little ship and morally separated from the influence of the crowd, so that He can bring divine influence to bear on them.

The Lord made Saul a Paul, which means *little*. It is in keeping in the place of littleness that we escape from the influences of the crowd. The more scope a servant has, the more danger there is of the crowd pressing on him and then his service will be influenced by the crowd! Instead of keeping apart from it and influencing it they have allowed the crowd to influence them. It has become the downfall of many a labourer that he has not had a little ship. If he had had his little ship he would have influenced them for God.

Ques What do you mean by a little ship?

CAC I was thinking of the spirit of the servant, that one must be prepared to be little, to keep oneself apart from everything big. If a servant is in that spirit, prepared to be little, he gets divine support. It is a matter of premeditation with the Lord; He speaks to His disciples, He impresses them with the thought that there is a big crowd, and they were to remember the little ship. Paul never got out of his little ship; he never allowed himself to be influenced by the crowd. It would work out that we would be prepared to go along with the few, to withdraw from the influences that are unclean, and go on with the few who follow righteousness, faith, love and peace; this is in keeping with what the Lord says here. He rebukes the unclean spirits, not because they opposed Him, but because they cry out, "Thou art the Son of God". He refuses their testimony, not their opposition; He would not be manifested in that way. It is characteristic of this gospel. The Lord hides Himself from publicity in this gospel; He repeatedly charges the people not to say anything to make Him known. That is the secret of the little ship; He hides Himself from publicity. J.N.D. said that the secret of being right in the present day is to go on with ceaseless activity in obscurity. The moment we want to put ourselves in evidence we are wrong and out of accord with the present character of service. The Lord shrank from publicity; it is most touching, for it is so opposite to what we are naturally. We naturally like publicity, but the Lord on five or six occasions in this gospel clearly enjoins on those healed that they should not speak of it. We should go on content to take the little opportunities for service that may be allotted, and not desire any little bit of publicity. Publicity is a most damaging thing; it needs much grace if the Lord gives it, as He does to some. The greater the measure of the publicity, the greater the necessity for the servant to maintain the desire for obscurity — for the little ship — to be out of sight, to do his work and not talk about it, or be talked about. The true servant does his work and does not want it talked about; he wants to go on with it.

The secret of all this lies in the next section — the mountain.

You can be as great as you like on the mountain, and if we do not know what it is to be great on the mountain we shall never know what it is to be rightly in service. The mountain signifies that elevated place where we get the light and mind of heaven and of God. I think in the Lord going up to the mountain we get the secret source of power. We learn up there what is greater than all service. When it first dawned on me that the service of the blessed God towards me was immeasurable, and infinitely greater than any poor service that I could render Him, it turned my soul upside down! The mountain is the place where we know God's thoughts and ways as higher than the thoughts of man. The Lord serves us up there; there is no crowd there. He calls us to bring us into the mind of God; calling us to the mountain is calling us to the mind of God. How great it is! If I think of the mind of God, what I could do in service is obliterated from my thoughts. If you find yourself introduced into the circle of God's thoughts, the blessed service of God towards man, you get the region of what is beyond what you can do, and you are simply lost in the greatness of God. There is a sovereign call; the Lord goes up into the mountain, "and calls whom he himself would". "He appointed twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them to preach, and to have power to heal diseases, and to cast out demons". It is entirely a question of sovereignty; the volunteer principle has no place at all in it. There is no thought of volunteering for the Lord's service.

Ques Are we to wait to be called to the mountain?

CAC My exercise would be to respond when I am called: there is a sovereignty about the call. When we come to levitical service there is nothing voluntary. There was no voluntary element in the service of the levites; every member of the tribe was divinely appointed and his service divinely determined. "They came to him", but it was a sovereign call — "I have chosen you, and have set you" — what a sense of obligation it gives! Many people feel they are free to serve the Lord when they like, but you are not. You are absolutely His servant or not at all. You are bound to service and the voluntary element does not come in. The volunteer thought has been most pernicious among the people of God, because people think they can serve if they like or feel led, or, if not, they can leave it alone: there is no christianity in that. All the writers of the New Testament refer to themselves as bondservants. The gospel produces that sort of subjection that bows to divine sovereignty, so for men to complain that they are not somebody else, or to envy another, is impossible! If the Lord is pleased to dignify certain servants, it is all sovereignty. Here, three men were dignified with surnames, not all. The Lord calls three to the peerage and the nine were commoners. It is all sovereignty. If we were all content to be what the grace of God would make us, and to do what the Lord has appointed

us in the way of service, we should be supremely happy and in result we should have an ordered company sitting round in order and restful because all have accepted divine sovereignty. We find the same principle all through Scripture that a man never gets into his right place until he accepts divine sovereignty.

Ques Have you any thought about surnames?

CAC They indicate a special character of service. Simon was surnamed Peter. The Lord suggested by his surname spiritual material for the house of God: He made that thought prominent in Simon, and gives him a distinguished place in His house. Peter's ministry was special and distinguished in that way. James and John's surname was more the thought of power of the kingdom — sons of thunder — it gives the idea of what is really thunder, what makes a loud noise in this world for God. I think it is the ability to suffer, and that is what marked James and John. James was the first to be killed, and John's was the longest path of suffering of all the apostles. That is where the power of the kingdom makes itself in evidence — the voice of the Lord in majesty — He can maintain people here in the path of suffering. That is the kingdom side. Peter gives material for the house, but in James and John we see the character of the testimony of the kingdom which largely lies in ability to suffer: that is what speaks loudly for God in this world. The apostles spoke loudly for God in this world because they were prepared to suffer; that made them sons of thunder.

All this prepared for the house position. That is the fourth position in which we find the Lord in this chapter. The Lord is found in the house surrounded by an ordered company; they are doing the will of God, not by their activities but by sitting round Him. What is the will of God at the present time? It is the assembly. The assembly is set forth in figure in this company sitting round the Lord. Those who had not been on the mountain, though naturally well disposed, do not understand the position, so they say, "He is beside himself". There are people like that today; they are well disposed to the Lord but have no understanding of His movements, or position, or the character of the moment: they are outside. His mother and His brethren were outside the house, they were not adversaries. How many are like that today, not adversaries, but out of touch with the character of the moment? The secret is they have never been on the mountain. If we do not go up to the mountain we shall never get into the house. In the house the Lord finds Himself surrounded by spiritual kindred; it has superseded the natural. The spiritual kindred sit round Him in the house; every element of family affection is brought in. One would covet to move under the Lord's influence on these lines.

MARK 3

Mark 3:20-35

CAC We were speaking a little last week of the Lord as seen in the different positions set forth in this chapter — the synagogue, the sea, the mountain, and the last section of this chapter 3 brings us to the house, which seems to be the end in view in this section of the gospel.

The house would appear to set forth that which answers to the dispensation of God which is in faith — that is not exactly a public thing, but it is known and to be furthered amongst the saints. The word 'dispensation' means household management: that is what we look to find in the house; and if God's household management comes into view you may depend on it all is divinely ordered and the will of God is done. That is, the house is precisely a contrast to the strong man's house. There are two houses here: the strong man's house, and then what is set forth in the house to which Jesus and His disciples came, where we have the thought of a sphere where things are ordered according to God.

Ques Are you thinking of it as the house of God?

CAC Well, it comes perhaps to that in result. Here we see the contrast there is between the within and without. The Lord's relatives are found without; His mother and brethren stand without. The disciples come to the house, and in the house we see an ordered circle: it is not a multitude, not an unregulated crowd such as we were seeing in the early part of the chapter, where the Lord has to call for a little ship lest the crowd should press upon Him. That is an unordered crowd, but nevertheless a sphere of service. But here there is an ordered circle, and sitting in the centre of that circle, Jesus the Son of God. It is in one aspect the summing up of the service of the Lord; it is a circle where the will of God is done — the assembly. That is the end of a distinct section of this gospel; it shows the fruit of divine service that there is a sphere of this kind. The strong man — the devil — has a house, and he has got men into that house; and in it all is unclean because there is no room in it for the Spirit of God. It is a figure of the conditions that obtain in the world, and to a large extent among the people of God. The service of the Lord was rendered among Israel, and yet He spoke of Himself as finding the strong man in possession of his house, and of binding him and rendering him impotent and plundering his goods. The service of the Son of God is to render the strong man impotent, to pull down his house and to dispossess all in the house; and to build up another house where everything will be of God, and the will of God will be done. This is the object for which the Son of God came into the world. He

rendered impotent the devil and undid his works, and established a circle where the will of God is done — all there are kindred with Himself, and God's end is reached.

Ques Here it is doing the will of God; in Luke it is doing the word. What is the difference?

CAC I think the point in Luke is the testimony of divine grace. The word of God is the testimony of divine grace, and in Luke those kindred with Christ are those found here in the testimony of grace: they not only hear the word of God but do it. The whole life is to be coloured by grace, and what is not coloured by grace cannot be of God, because the word of God is revealed in grace: it is a question of doing that. It is the character of the acting of those kindred with Christ. Every act in His life was an act of grace; it was God revealed in grace right through, and those kindred with Him act on that principle.

Ques What is your thought about doing the will of God?

CAC I have a simple thought about it. There is a circle where the will of God is done, and it is not done anywhere else; that is the assembly.

It is said that if we give place to what is connected with the house we will find ourselves restricted in service, but the fact is we are not restricted. The disciples and Jesus go into the house and everything takes house character; there is no restriction in service, a great crowd comes together. I believe those who give place to house principles will not find themselves restricted in service any more than Paul, who received all who came to him in his own hired house. That is the character of service today: we maintain principles, and they put us in a restricted position externally. The house is a sort of limited sphere, but it becomes the centre of divine attraction. So a great multitude came together: there is an attraction that extends itself over all who fear God. One would like to be attractive; and to maintain house principles in their necessarily restricted character, but to find that God works in grace, and brings a right kind of crowd together — those who have a spiritual object in view, and we do not want anyone else.

Ques Would you say more about house principles?

CAC There are just two: honouring the Spirit and recognising the lordship of Christ. These two principles would secure house conditions. We have an ordered company sitting in a circle, and everyone in that circle has found himself in direct relation with Christ. That is the will of God: a circle where everyone honours the Spirit in contrast with those outside who speak

injuriously against the Spirit. Those in the circle honour the Spirit and give place to Christ.

Ques Would you say more as to the lordship of Christ?

CAC We reach the lordship of Christ by way of the Spirit.

Rem No one could say "Lord Jesus" except by the Spirit.

CAC Yes, the great distinctive feature of the dispensation of God is the presence of the Lord; it is the first thing that faith takes account of. The one thing which marks the present period is that God is here Spirit-wise. If you recognise that and honour it, Jesus gets His place as Lord, and in no other way. If you find a company honouring the Spirit and recognising the lordship of Christ, that company is morally kindred with Christ and is doing the will of God; and it is not found anywhere else, because the Spirit brings in what is of God and shuts out the flesh, and the lordship of Christ brings everything to a divine result. So you have an ordered crowd sitting in a circle round Him. It is a great thing to come into the will of God: it is found in the house now. People may pay twenty shillings in the pound, and lead decent Christian lives; they may own God in their families and businesses, yet if they do not honour the Spirit they are not doing the will of God, because the will of God is indissolubly bound up with the Spirit and the lordship of Christ. If a person is not honouring the Spirit and recognising the lordship of Christ, how can he be doing the will of God?

If we get house conditions there is no limit as to how far we can be furthered. Paul speaks to Timothy about things furthering the dispensation — household management — which is in faith. Certain things do further the dispensation, so that we can move on from Corinthians to Colossians and Ephesians. There is great development possible if the will of God gets its place.

I think the Lord's mother and brethren represent well-disposed believers in a way, but those who are not spiritual. They are not adverse like the scribes, but they have no capacity to follow the spiritual import of what is there: they say, He is beside Himself, He is out of His mind; and they are outside the house. They are disposed to be friendly and to do Him a kindness, but incapable of understanding the spiritual import of the situation. They represent unspiritual people, not enemies of Christ, but those incapable of seeing the bearing of the situation, so they are outside. We all know there is a vast number of well-disposed people, who believe on Christ, yet they do not give place to the Spirit, so they are entirely out of accord with the will of God. It is the Lord saying plainly that the natural must be superseded by the spiritual; it indicates that there is a new, a spiritual order. We shall never get people sitting in a

circle round the Lord, divinely adjusted to Him and to one another, except in a company of spiritual persons, who recognise the Spirit and give place to Him: it is never by the flesh, only by the dispossession of the flesh. It is the Lord indicating the supersession of the natural by the spiritual. There are three classes in this section: His relatives, who are clearly at the moment unspiritual persons; then the scribes, who represent the element of positive adversity, and say, He has Beelzebub; and finally His disciples.

Ques What are the scribes?

CAC They show what the flesh is in its inveterate enmity against God. The Lord speaks of their blasphemy and evil-speaking, not in relation to Himself, but in relation to the Spirit. There was an unseen Person present as well as a seen Person. The Son of God was present; but an unseen, invisible, divine Person was there, too, and the Lord jealously guards that unseen Person. It says in another gospel that what is said against the Son of man shall be forgiven, but what is said against the Holy Spirit shall never be forgiven.

Ques Would speaking against the Lord's servants come under this heading?

CAC People may speak against me as a responsible servant of Christ — every true servant of Christ must expect to go through evil report — but suppose in my service there was something absolutely of the Spirit of God, and people said that was evil, I should tremble for them. But we must remember in the case of the Lord every act and every word was purely and absolutely in the power of the Spirit, so to say that He had an unclean spirit was direct injurious speaking against the Holy Spirit. There was no intermixture at all; it was the power of goodness coming in to set men free from all that was evil, and to set them up in the will of God. The guilt of this was based on the fact that man has something he cannot divest himself of, a something he got through the fall that it is impossible to rid himself of, and that is the knowledge of good and evil. Man cannot divest himself of it though he might wish to. He has the knowledge of good and evil, and he sees absolute divine good, and says it is evil. There is no forgiveness for that; he has violated the deepest moral principle of his being. There is unadulterated good, and man in his wickedness says it is unclean, it is evil. God in the Old Testament said, "Woe unto them who call evil good, and good evil", Isaiah 5: 20. It is a very serious thing to see good, and know it is good, and call it evil. I only remember one instance in my experience which would answer to this. It was many years ago, and a man to whom I had spoken the gospel said to me, 'It is no use for you to talk to me; your God is my devil'. I look on that as injurious speaking against the Holy Spirit. I have dwelt on this to emphasise the tremendous importance of the Holy Spirit. What marks the company in the house is that they have

honoured the Spirit; they have honoured everything that is seen in Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit instead of refusing it and charging it as evil. That is the exercise we have today. It is serious to speak against what is good, though we could not say it goes as far as injurious speaking against the Holy Spirit — that depends on the measure of light the person has. This sin only comes in where there is light and ability to discern good, but malice enough to say that it is evil.

Ques I suppose no one that is a believer would do this?

CAC It is absolutely impossible. It is obvious that no person who is born again would do this; it is not possible for any true believer to take this ground.

We have these two conditions. First, unspiritual persons unable to discern, represented in the mother and brethren; secondly another class who can discern what is good but so hate it that they say it is evil. Then we have a third class who are able to discern and give place to the Spirit; and in figure as ordered by the Spirit find their place in the circle round the Lord, and each one says Lord to Jesus. That is the circle where the will of God is done. We have three circles: a circle of those incapable of discerning — believers like that are born again but have not the Spirit. The second circle is composed of the synagogue of Satan, marked by positive enmity; they see what is good and speak injuriously of it. Then the third circle represents true believers according to God, where all is in order according to the Spirit, the Lord getting His place and the will of God being done.

Rem His mother and brethren called Him.

CAC It seems to be an intrusion which the Lord refuses, just as He refused it in John 2, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" The Lord refuses the natural because He ever gives place to the Holy Spirit. Natural influences hinder people from perceiving what is spiritual. Honouring the Spirit is what has disentangled the Lord's people in these last days from the confusion around.

Ques Why do you put the Spirit before the lordship of Christ?

CAC Because no one could say Lord to Jesus except in the power of the Spirit of God.

Ques What do you mean by saying Lord to Jesus?

CAC It means more than the use of the term. Many say, "Lord, Lord" and do not the things that He says; but saying Lord to Jesus is an affectionate recognition of His supremacy which brings into subjection to Him. Typically this incident gives us the assembly as that ordered circle of spiritual persons

where the Spirit is honoured and where everyone does say Lord to Jesus. Saying Lord to Jesus is, as I understand it, an assembly exercise. Paul is speaking of the assembly in 1 Corinthians 12: 1 - 7.

"But concerning spiritual manifestations, brethren, I do not wish you to be ignorant ... . I give you therefore to know, that no one, speaking in the power of the Spirit of God, says, Curse on Jesus; and no one can say, Lord Jesus, unless in the power of the Holy Spirit. But there are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are distinctions of services, and the same Lord; and there are distinctions of operations, but the same God who operates all things in all". We have the thought of an ordered circle. They are all sitting round the Lord restfully and the Spirit is honoured. Certainly those sitting round the Lord gave Him His place and were just the contrast to people speaking injuriously against the Holy Spirit. There was that in Corinth that answered to it. That is the will of God; it is the primary thought as worked out in the assembly — a circle of spiritual persons who judge themselves and give place to the Spirit, and are practically under the lordship of Christ.

In Romans 12, presenting one's body a living sacrifice puts one into the circle — "We being many, are one body in Christ", verse 5. Paul shows us the circle, and no one is pre-eminent in that circle but the Lord.

Ques We have every tongue confessing Jesus Christ as Lord in Philippians 2?

CAC Yes, that confession is found now in the assembly, the only sphere where He is confessed as Lord. He is professed by christendom.

Ques What about Romans 10: 9? Is that connected with the assembly or the individual?

CAC That is clearly individual; that is how we get salvation. "Thou shalt be saved". We get deliverance from the whole scene of lawlessness. In Romans 12 you come in view of the whole company. While the presentation of the body as a living sacrifice to God must be an individual thing, yet doing that puts you into the circle. In Romans 10 you confess Him in the presence of His enemies, that is the great idea of confessing Jesus as Lord. It does not mean that you go home and tell your converted father that you are a believer, but you confess Him in the presence of those who refuse Him all His rights. You are prepared to say, He is Lord to me.

I think we ought to be exercised in the face of conditions rapidly drifting to apostasy. The whole condition of Christendom is rapidly drifting to a state which would answer to speaking injuriously against the Spirit of God; and in face of that we should honour the Spirit, and allow Him to adjust us in relation to Christ as Lord and to one another. The Spirit would adjust us to the Lord,

who is the centre of that circle, and being adjusted in relation to Him as Lord we would be adjusted with one another; so we should find ourselves in an ordered circle which would give scope for the whole will of God. There was that at Colosse. Paul could speak of rejoicing and seeing their order. They were an ordered company in relation to the Lord, and Paul was seeking to bring them a step further in the recognition of headship. If we give place to the Spirit, not only is the lordship of Christ recognised, but the Head gets His place. So in Zechariah 4 we see the golden vessel furnished with oil, like the assembly in 1 Corinthians 12, and everything there is "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit". What is the result? The headstone is brought forth with shoutings, "Grace, grace unto it".

Ques Are we each to be a golden pipe?

CAC Yes, that is part of the ordered circle. Everyone is to be a golden pipe for the oil to flow through. There is plenty of oil. How sweet when everything goes with no jar, and we learn how to blend like a band of music! The conductor stands in the midst and they all blend.

Then if we have an ordered circle there is nothing to interfere with edification — that is brought about by food. When we have the assembly of God ordered there is a full food supply; that is the thought of house conditions. The food supply is a test of whether we have good house conditions. It is a poor house where there is no food supply, and God's house never goes on with an empty cupboard! So we are to be seen as spiritual persons all regulated as to Christ, and with a good food supply.

Rem Referring to the epistle to the Colossians, Epaphras prays (chapter 4: 12) that they may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

CAC Yes. At Colosse there was an ordered circle, but a good deal more beyond; there was the truth of headship and the mystery. Epaphras had done his best for them, and felt he could not carry them any further, so he went to Paul and told him about them; and then he prayed and agonised for them, that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. He was looking that the household management should be perfect and worked out. All the will of God would lead them on to the epistle to the Ephesians. We get the crowning point of household management there: Paul uses the word twice in Ephesians — it is the same word, dispensation. The house idea involves the mutual relations of the saints. It is quite certain that if we honour the Spirit, and give place to the lordship of Christ, there will be perfect adjustment of everything; the circle will not be jagged, but even all round.

MARK 4

Mark 4

CAC To rightly understand what comes before us here, we have to carry on the thought which is suggested in the closing part of the previous chapter: that is, that in connection with the house we have distinctly the thought of those round the Lord *within* and those who are *without*. The Lord points the contrast very definitely in this chapter between those within and those without, and the understanding of the parable is limited to those within. It would appear to be a most blessed and perfect instruction for the saints, looked at as having the inside place, in order that they might be intelligent as to all that is going on in the sphere of service. We cannot rightly serve the Lord unless we are intelligent in what is going on in the sphere which we have to do with. There is a very wide sphere of service indicated by the sea and the great crowd. There is no restraint in sowing in the good ground; the sower's hand takes a wide sweep, but when we come to actual result it is very limited. Those sitting round the Lord, those in His confidence, get an understanding of the whole thing. If we honour the Spirit, and give Christ His place, and are found in the inside place, sitting round Him in a circle doing the will of God, we shall have intelligence as to all that is going on in the wide scope of service in connection with the sowing. There is a hidden secret connected with it, and that is the mystery of the kingdom of God, and no one knows that but those within. There is no mystery about healing people's bodies, no mystery about cleansing the leper or healing the paralytic; but when it comes to the sowing of the word, there is a mystery that is only known to the initiated. We ought to understand what is for God at the present time. We are surrounded by a christian profession, the result of the sowing, and it has come within the scope of the service of Christ: it is widespread, but we ought to understand what is for God; there is something for God. We ought to know how to serve, and in order to know it we must know what the position is. The state of things in Israel then was very much like the state of things in christendom today. The people professed to be the people of God, and took the place of obedience in a certain outward way, but they were really on the verge of apostasy, and it is solemn that the Lord speaks in parables to hide the truth from them. The scripture in Isaiah quoted here is a word of judgment on the people professedly in relation to God; it is judgment, not blessing. In Isaiah 6 the prophet himself was brought into the presence of the glory of the Lord, and was made to realise that he was undone, a man of unclean lips dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips; but when he confessed that, the glowing coal from the altar was made to touch his mouth, his iniquity was taken away,

his sin was expiated. Then in verse 8 he hears the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The prophet answers, "Here am I; send me", and he is sent with a message of judgment — "Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and not perceive. Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted and healed". It is a word of judgment on the nation as a whole, but verse 13 is very beautiful: "A tenth part shall still be therein, and it shall return and be eaten; as the terebinth and as the oak whose trunk remaineth after the felling: the holy seed shall be the trunk thereof". The whole nation as such was apostate and coming under judgment, but there was a holy seed, something secured for God in the midst of it all. That is the position in Mark 4; the nation as a whole had sinned away all its privileges, broken the law, despised the prophets, and now rejected the service and ministry of the Son of God. The nation as a whole had lost their opportunity, so things were to be hid from them, therefore the Lord spoke in parables. But the Lord secures a holy seed, something for God in spite of all; some seed falls on good ground and becomes fruitful. Now, the Lord says, I want you to understand the position and be intelligent in your service; you must understand that the great profession is given up and has come under judgment from God, but I will secure something for God for all that God will have His tithes.

Ques The sower sows the word. Do you regard that as what the Lord brings before us, as more than gospel preaching?

CAC It is the word. Whatever God makes the subject of testimony, whatever He speaks in the way of testimony, is the word; and it is sown. It only produces fruit in a very limited sphere. That is what the Lord would exercise us about in this chapter. There is fruit, a result for God, but only in a limited sphere; and the Lord carefully and in detail explains to us the reason why the word does not become fruitful in people. That incidentally warns us as to what may prevent it becoming fruitful in us.

Ques Why is there so much about the sea in Mark?

CAC It indicates a wider scope of service: it is not in the limitations of Israel but in a universal sphere — "every creature under heaven" is a very wide sphere.

The attitude the Lord takes in regard to the sphere of service is very limited; He serves from the ship, He does not place Himself in the midst of this crowd. He is in the midst of the crowd in the house, He is the centre of that circle, but He is not in the midst of this crowd. He detaches Himself from them, though

He serves them; He preserves His detachment from them! That is what we have to do: you can only serve people as you maintain detachment from them. If you read through Acts you will find the servants always preserved their detachment: they came to people here, there and everywhere as witnesses of a Man who had died, and been raised again — that detached them. We come with a message that cannot be linked on with anything here; it forms no part of this world, and it is concerning a Man who is outside everything that men are going on with. That answers to the ship, that is our detachment. We cannot make ourselves one with people and do them good. You can *influence* as many as you like; the Lord influenced the whole crowd, He taught them all but He maintained His detachment. We have to speak of a Man who has died and has risen, and that means detachment from the world.

Ques Is the sowing unique to the Lord?

CAC It was perfectly carried out by Him, He is the sower, but the whole point of this gospel is that the character of His service is to give character to ours. The first feature of service is that we must be in moral detachment from the people we are to serve, and then you can bring spiritual influence to bear on them. At the same time the servant should understand what he is working for, not to get the whole world converted, but working to get a tenth for God; there is to be a holy seed secured for God. That is what we have before us. We need to understand all these things because we come in contact with them every day. Everyone here tonight is serving, and if we are serving in connection with this great result for God we ought to know what is going on.

Ques Paul said, "We pray you in Christ's stead", 2 Corinthians 5: 20.

CAC Yes, and "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me", 2 Corinthians 13: 3. Christ was the true evangelist, and every true evangelist is the vessel of the voice of Christ.

Then the Lord explains how things work in detail. There are those from whom Satan takes away the word immediately, and the Lord does not attribute this to the carelessness of people. We must remember that the Lord does not speak of Satan as we do. Sometimes we are ready to say that Satan does a good many things which he does not do, but the Lord does not do that. This is a direct activity of Satan — Satan takes away the seed. We are told in Matthew that it is when the hearer does not understand, but the Lord does not bring that out in Mark. It ought to be a warning to us to be very careful when we do not understand things. In connection with ministry we ought not to let things pass that we do not understand. If a brother says something you do not understand, go and tell him so; we ought to be concerned to understand what we hear. If we do not understand and are careless, we make it an easy

job for Satan to take away the seed. We are far too careless, even as believers, about the word. We may lose a present and lasting joy through being careless. If we do not understand and do not take the trouble to enquire, Satan will take it away. People say sometimes, It is over my head, but they ought to ask. I knew a man who was converted in Yorkshire, and from the first day he began to read his Bible. Every scripture he came to that he did not understand — and there were a good many — he put a little cross against in the margin of his Bible; so, when he came across a believer, he had always a profitable subject of enquiry and conversation. I never knew a man grow so quickly in spiritual knowledge.

He was in dead earnest, and what he wanted to understand he would have out with everyone until he did understand it. Satan takes a good deal away because we are so careless. Paul said to Timothy that he had fully followed up his teaching; Timothy had not been careless about a bit of it. The Lord warns us against the positive action of Satan in taking away what is sown so that we may just as well not have heard it. If Satan takes it away it might as well never have fallen on the ground.

Ques Does the Lord speak of understanding this parable as important?

CAC Yes, it is a basis of spiritual understanding, and it is most essential for those who are serving the Lord to know these things and weigh them.

Then there is a second class who are marked by superficiality, no depth of earth. That touches a good many of us. These are the people who enjoy the meetings: they say, 'It was so interesting, I never heard anything like it before'; but you never hear them say, 'That reading cost me a sleepless night'. There is no activity of conscience with them, only joy. When the word acts in the conscience there is no joy at first, because it raises the whole state of soul before God, and brings the soul consciously into the presence of God. That for a sinful creature could never be a happy experience. There is no bringing in righteousness apart from conviction of sin. There is nothing experimental in this class of hearers; the word is received happily, and any exercise of soul is so shallow that it does not result in any fruit being produced for God, so that, as soon as things are difficult or any test arises, instead of the work of God being consolidated, they are stumbled and offended. When there is a real work of God, opposition consolidates it, and persecution burnishes it and makes it brighter than before. Tribulation and persecution test whether they have any root in themselves or if they have only adopted some new idea which sounds very nice. The efforts of the enemy to hinder and oppose bring out the reality of the work of God when there, but if it is not there, they expose the shallowness of what is there. As to its application to ourselves, it

would lead to prayer for a deepening of the work of God in our souls. If anyone has a consciousness of the work being shallow, let him be exercised and pray that the work may be deepened: all such exercise shows there is an honest and good heart. We all feel how shallow we are and one prays that God's work may be deepened and matured, and that there may be something in the way of definite fruit for God.

The effect of receiving all this instruction from the Lord would be to maintain divine exercise in the soul, so that, as we see the great hindrances to fruit for God, we take up the exercise of it so that fruitfulness may not be hindered in our souls, and it gives us understanding as to why there is not fruit in others. The exercise raised in this chapter is that there should be fruit for God. I think fruit in Mark must have service in view; in Romans it is the service of God, we are become bondmen to God, and in chapter 7 we bring forth fruit for God as the result of being married to Christ. We do not bring forth fruit for God without exercise; there must be the knowledge of God first; and there must be the presence of the Spirit; and marriage to Christ. All this in its working out calls for a good deal of exercise. There is an exercised mind in Romans 7 which is anxious there should be fruit for God, but we have all to learn how to produce fruit for God. None of us produces one bit of fruit without learning how to do it; and then learning to surmount the thorns — the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things. They have to be seriously weighed and surmounted, or there will be no fruit for God. If I am occupied with the cares of life, however legitimate, I shall not produce fruit for God. So with the deceitfulness of riches — the more you acquire the more tendency there is to get your mind on it. If my mind is on that, I shall not produce fruit for God. Then the lusts of other things; it is astonishing how things come into the mind as objects of desire. People are not so much hindered by what they possess as by what they would like to possess. It might not be riches, but almost anything may become an object of desire.

Ques When souls are born again, they desire to serve God and then they find barrenness within.

CAC When there is desire to serve God and to serve the Lord, the hindrance begins to be felt — that is like the clearing of the ground; it must be cleared in order that there should be something secured for God. If the Lord indicates the hindrances, it is most instructive. If I want to be fruitful I like the Lord to tell me what hinders, I am anxious He should tell me, and I do not take it amiss for Him to tell me.

Ques In Mark the fruit increases?

CAC Yes, that is very interesting; it goes from thirty to sixty and from sixty to one hundred. That is the effect of the service of Christ as rendered to every one of us: there is increase instead of things diminishing if we become subjects of the service of Christ. But if things are left to our responsibility we can understand Matthew telling us how they go from sixty to thirty. One loves to think of increase. Suppose all of us here were producing thirty, how nice it would be to move on to sixty.

Ques Is exercise on the line of clearing the ground?

CAC Yes, it is a great thing to break up your fallow ground, as was said by the prophet to Israel. As we are exercised in the fear of God the process goes on — the breaking up of the fallow ground and drinking in of the rain that falls upon it. The precious ministry of Christ from heaven is always falling upon us, and if the ground is broken up and the rain comes down, there is sure to be fruit, and increasing fruit, too.

The first class of hearers are not believers at all. The second and third make a profession and carry on for a time, but there is no fruit from any of the first three. The things that hinder fruit will always hinder fruit: they hinder fruit in me as a believer as much as they hinder it in a mere professor. I cannot say, The various hindrances are deadly ones, but as I am converted they are comparatively innocuous. No, they are deadly everywhere. "The lusts of other things" is a deadly principle wherever you get it.

Ques It is only the good ground that bears fruit?

CAC There never could be any good ground if there is not a holy seed. There is a holy seed, and if not there never will be any fruit. Though everything public is cut down as in Isaiah 6, yet God has His tenth, His holy seed — that is the real substance for God, and where you have the holy seed and good ground there is fruit. Perhaps there is not as much as there might be, but there is fruit, though it may be only thirty instead of sixty. I take it the fruit in this gospel would be the work of faith and the labour of love. The Thessalonians had it, "Work of faith, and labour of love, and enduring constancy of hope, of the Lord Jesus Christ". That is fruit and it all springs out of the knowledge of God. They had the true knowledge of God though they were only young converts, and that precious fruit appeared, the work of faith and labour of love: they started from the outset on the line of serving the living God. The measure of fruit in us is the measure of how we go on with the work of faith and labour of love. We can all reckon ourselves up as to how much we are on that line. The service is the service of God just as the service of Christ was, but its beneficial results are manward.

There was great gain in being about the Lord (verse 10) as those with the twelve were. We would get spiritual understanding of how things work, and we would get to know what helps and what hinders, so we would acquire an education that qualifies us for service; and then the result is there is a light for God in this world (verse 21), the effect of what is carried on secretly. You cannot see what is going on in my soul, and I cannot see what is going on in your soul, but the result is the light is to be set on a lampstand so that everyone may see it. Faith brings God into the soul so that in this gospel we are to take heed what we hear. The Lord speaks about what is hidden being brought to light. That is not what is bad but what is good. The hidden good that God has worked in the souls of His people is all coming to light in testimony. Whatever we hear we are to hear in the spirit of service — "take heed what ye hear" — so that we may be able to measure it out to others. In the proportion in which we measure it to others we prosper ourselves — "with what measure ye mete, it shall be meted to you". That is not like the Sermon on the Mount, where we are treated as we treat others. Here it is what we receive we serve out to others. We are to take heed to the word because it is entrusted to us for others, and as we measure it out it is measured to us. You will never find yourself empty by passing on the precious word; you will get an increase. People dry up if they do not pass things on. That is the difference between hearing in Mark and Luke. In Luke it is how you hear; if you look at the context you see it is that you are to take heed so that you may become possessed of the thing for yourself; you are to listen intently, it is how you hear that you may acquire the thing for yourself. In Mark you are to pay attention and take heed what you hear because it is incumbent upon you to serve it out to others. The character of the thing must be heeded and pressed on your soul so that you are able to measure it out to others, and as you do this you get more and more measured out to you. People often say of a gifted servant, How can he go on always fresh and full and never empty? Why is it? The secret is that he is measuring so much out to others that he gets it back himself. Everyone here can prove it. Everyone here has tried at some time or other to pass on to some soul what is precious to his own heart. What was the effect? You got a great deal more in your own soul. As we measure it out it is measured to us again. That is why some of us get very little, because we measure so little out to other people. What conversations there would be among the brethren if they spent their time in talking of things they want to understand! You may say, I have nothing to say; but is there nothing in the Book that you do not understand? If you asked a few questions about that, it would soon set the ball rolling.

We were speaking last week of the sowing, and the result for God wherever the kingdom of God is in power. There may be cases where it is only in word, and then there is no fruit. If the kingdom of God is in power there must be a result for God.

Ques What connection has the light with the parable of the sower?

CAC It indicates that whatever God works secretly in the souls of men is intended to come out in public witness.

Rem The light which was given to Israel did not become public witness.

CAC Exactly. In connection with the kingdom of God, when He asserts Himself in power it results, as it did not in Israel, in the light being on the candlestick — it was light for God. Whatever light one may have in one's soul is never in its right place until it is on the candlestick, where it comes into view. It is a public shining to be seen by all. Before it is on the candlestick it is made good in the souls in whom God has wrought. He works it in first and then sets it up in testimony.

Ques When you say 'public testimony', you do not mean necessarily public speaking?

CAC No. It is a question of there being that in the walk of the saints which is a distinct witness for God in the world; people can take account of the shining of divine light in the world.

Ques What do the bushel and the bed mean?

CAC They indicate that the light may be hidden by what is connected with a business life, or by self-indulgence.

Ques "There is nothing hidden which shall not be made manifest" — would that be connected with the lampstand?

CAC Yes. In a sense the divine work is hidden; it is a secret thing at first; the work begins in men's souls, and cannot be taken account of. Many hidden, secret, exercises have been wrought of God in men's souls that have not come to light yet, that have not come to any expression, but the divine intent is that whatever is divinely wrought within should come into expression. We were speaking last week of the Thessalonians as a sample of persons in whom fruit was produced; their faith was everywhere spoken of, the light was on the lampstand. What is in a person's soul is hardly a witness, but when it begins to affect that person's course and manner of life, the whole character of his ways, it comes into witness, the light is put on the lampstand.

Ques Is it the enemy's tactics to cover the light so that it should not be manifest?

CAC Yes, he is the adversary of God. Satan is not particularly adverse to the blessing of a man except so far as the glory of God and of Christ are bound up in it.

Ques Does it suggest that God will see to it that His own work will become manifest?

CAC Yes, there is great comfort in that. God will bring to light what He effects in souls; what is given is given that it may come into service, so the Lord says, "Take heed what ye hear; with what measure ye mete, it shall be meted to you; and there shall be more added to you". What one receives is to express itself in service, and the prosperity of the servant depends on liberality, what he measures out to others of the good he has got himself.

Ques Is the kingdom always in power?

CAC Yes, and, where it is, there must be some expression of God in the subjects of the kingdom. The meaning of the kingdom of God is that the influence of God has begun to exert itself on the person.

Ques What does it mean, the seed grows "*he knoweth not how*"?

CAC That is important because it shows how the development and result of the sowing are entirely the work of God. The sower has nothing more to do with the seed after sowing until the harvest; he simply casts the seed on the earth. Even the blessed and perfect Servant Himself was not the One who gave the increase, so the verse quoted is very striking. We would only get a verse like that in Mark's gospel; we should not find it anywhere else.

Ques Does it correspond with, "That hour knoweth no man, ... neither the Son"?

CAC Yes, and we do not get that statement outside Mark.

Ques "Mine ears hast thou opened" — is that the mark of a true servant?

CAC Yes, the ear speaks of obedience. The ear of a servant is the characteristic member of his body, so, if the Spirit says in the Old Testament, "Ears hast thou prepared (digged)", the Spirit translates it in the New Testament, "A body hast thou prepared me". It is a body entirely for service in obedience.

What we find here is the action of God in giving prosperity to that which Christ sows, so that in result there is a full answer to the sowing in the harvest. Between the sowing and the harvest the Lord leaves things; it says He sleeps.

That is a great lesson for a servant — to leave the increase to God. It is a remarkable expression, "he does not know how". It is a lesson we have to learn, that God is the increase-giving God. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God gives the increase. We learn the sovereignty of God in these two parables; they are full of instruction. They give the two kinds of development going on. There is the development going on in view of the mature result for Christ; and there is another development going on which results in what is great in this world, but which ultimately affords shelter for what is evil. The question is, What kind of development are we identified with in our thoughts and affections? What marks the kingdom of God in power is a steady and continuous progression. Everything moves on in a continuous development in view of the full corn in the ear. That is the line on which the divine work moves; that is the spiritual development in the kingdom of what was sown by Christ in the souls of the people of God. It is developed by divine working. It is God who gives the increase: every bit of increase is of God, and it is given by God. God secures the prosperity of what Christ sows, He secures the development to a full result in the harvest. That is characteristic of the kingdom of God on the spiritual side. There is no decline there; people walking in the Spirit never decline. It is what the thing is — Christ casts the seed on the earth, and He leaves it there and there is no intervention on His part until the harvest. God produces conditions favourable to fruitfulness, so that, not only is there a divine seed, but earth is capable of bringing forth fruit of itself. I suppose the earth would set forth those conditions in man which are the product of divine working.

Then there is instruction as to the public development, too. The public side is the little mustard seed which becomes a great tree, so that the fowls of heaven find shelter there.

Ques Does the full corn in the ear refer to the individual or to the whole thing?

CAC It contemplates the whole thing, but the principle would apply to the individual. It contemplates the full result for Christ; what He has sown is left to develop by the work of God in the souls of His people, and there is continuous progress from blade to ear, and to full corn in the ear. It is very encouraging because we are apt to think more of the public side where things go from good to bad, and from bad to worse. As to the individual saint development should mark him until there is full result for God. One sometimes sees an aged saint in whom one feels there is a full ear of corn.

The sowing of Christ is the starting point, and ultimately there is a full result by the working of God, by the presence of the Spirit, and by the divine nature

in the saint which sets forth the earth bringing forth fruit of itself — there is power for fruitfulness in the earth. James exhorts to patient labour to wait for the precious fruit of the earth, "having patience for it until it receive the early and the latter rain". He says, "Ye also have patience ... for the coming of the Lord is drawn nigh". The saints were suffering, but all the suffering was developing precious fruit in the ear. There is always progress and development if we are with God.

Ques What does the sleeping and rising up mean?

CAC It indicates a lengthened period during which the sower does not interfere with what is going on; he has patience and leaves the development, he waits for the harvest. That is the attitude of the Lord at the present time. The Lord is waiting for the precious fruits of the earth, and the early and the latter rain are coming down upon it — what is the result? One feels the real test of the value of any ministry is not whether it is scriptural, or clear, or intelligent, but whether there is fruit produced by it. The Lord has sown the divine seed, and He is the Labourer waiting and marking the increase that may take place without His intervention. The Lord is patiently observing how the precious seed which He brought here is developing, whether it has reached the blade, or the ear, or the full corn in the ear; He is watching the souls of the saints in view of the harvest. John the baptist spoke of the floor being thoroughly winnowed, the chaff burned, and the wheat garnered. The harvest is a great thing for God and for Christ. The Lord is intensely interested in all God is doing to give fruitfulness to that precious seed which He has sown in view of the harvest.

The Lord is presented as Sower in the first half of this chapter, and as Sleeper in the last half of the chapter.

Ques What is the significance of the next section — going over to the other side?

CAC The Lord shows us another aspect in connection with what is going on at the present time. That is, He leads His servants to expect that in the course of their service and testimony they will encounter the power of Satan. The great test of the present time is, Can we trust the Lord asleep? It is unbelief that wakes Him, not faith; He rebuked them for unbelief when they woke Him.

Ques Did they doubt who He was?

CAC I do not think the disciples had understood who He was, though it says, "They took him even as he was in the ship". I suppose in a sense we have all taken Him as He was, but it is another thing to learn what He was, and if they had learnt that they could have had no fear of the boat sinking. It was a test

as to whether they had estimated the greatness of the Person who was there. "Having sent away the crowd, they take him with them, as he was, in the ship" — the Spirit suggests in that the greatness of the Person and all that had come out in Him. He was the beloved Son of God. He had bound the strong man, and shown Himself superior to all the power of evil. There was abundant evidence of who He was, and it was all there; they took Him as He was. In the blessed reality of His Person He was there, but they had not estimated it, so, when the storm came and He did not intervene but slept, they wake Him in unbelief. It showed how little they had estimated who the Person was. We are often tested in that way. When Satan's power comes into conflict with the testimony it looks sometimes as if the ship were going to sink — the ship filled.

What would give quietness would be the sense of the greatness of the Person whose testimony it is, and who is with His own. "They feared with great fear" — that shows how little they had estimated Him aright. We should never be in the least perturbed if we understood the power of the Person with us, because the Lord is with His own. He does not manifest it by some remarkable act, because it is characteristic of the present moment that He is asleep; there is no outward activity. The great exercise of the testimony is that we should learn to believe on Him. What a triumph it would have been if they had said, 'He is asleep, and it is all right!' The attitude the Lord takes up in any circumstance must be a model for His own. He knew all about the storm and the gusts of wind, but He was asleep and perfectly restful. We often want Him to do something. I have often prayed Him to do something, to wake up and move. He is saying, 'Can you not trust me asleep without a word or act just because you know Me?' It was certainly the right attitude which we find in the Lord; He was never out of time or tune. If it had not been right for Him to sleep He would not have been asleep: He was absolutely unperturbed in spite of the hostility of the enemy. I suppose He would have been alone in that: even Paul said, "Without were fightings, within were fears". One often thinks of the bride in the Song of Songs, "I charge you ... by the gazelles, or by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please". She would not have Him disturbed — that is right, it is the language of love. If we love and trust Him we do not want Him awaked. The disciples awoke Him in unbelief: nothing can sink the boat if He is in it.

Ques The Lord slept in the storm — is not that the thought that He never ceases to be in control?

CAC Yes, that is it.

'My bark is wafted from the strand,
By breath divine.
At the helm there rests a hand
Other than mine'.

Though He is outwardly quiescent, yet everything is under His control. The storm is as perfectly under His control when He is asleep as when He rises, and says, "Peace, be still". If He does not act, yet all is under His control.

Ques What do the "other little ships" suggest (verse 36)?

CAC It indicates that there are ships that have not the Lord on board. I suppose there are ships where the Lord is not. The great exercise is to move at His bidding: everything in the testimony of the Lord must be at His bidding. He had said, "Let us go to the other side" — it is at His bidding they go and they take Him as He was in the ship. They had that much affection that they would not go without Him. The Lord is very pleased to go with those who are in obedience, who are subject to His bidding and want Him. The Lord will always go with those who want Him.

Ques Might we have the Lord with us and not know Him?

CAC It is only of the fathers that John says, "Ye have known him that is from the beginning". We may have a sense that the Lord is with us, and not have a right estimate of who He is, of the greatness of the One who is with us. The disciples would not have gone without Him, but they had a feeble sense of who He was; they said, "Who then is this?" It would have been better if they had said that before.

Ques Peter slept in prison?

CAC Yes, Peter sleeping is very fine; it is like the Lord. Peter was not a very sleepy man naturally, but he could sleep chained between two soldiers who were going to cut off his head the next day; he got a restful night. You might have said to him, 'How can you sleep when they are going to cut off your head tomorrow?' Peter would answer, 'Nothing of the kind, the Lord told me long ago that I should live to be an old man, and I am not afraid'. Peter had absolute confidence in the Lord. That is the lesson of this chapter. In connection with the difficulties and conflicts of the testimony and service and the opposition of the enemy, the Lord would have us restful, and not dependent on what He does. We are just to trust Him if He does not do anything.

MARK 5 AND 6

Mark 5; Mark 6

CAC Chapter 5 shows us what is available, and the first few verses of this chapter are the solemn warning as to how we may fail to utilise what is available. The Lord intimates that where He is best known He may be least valued and utilised.

Ques Is that the significance of His own country?

CAC Yes, and of the synagogue. His own country is where He was best known externally, and yet we find nothing but human and natural thoughts of Him after the most wonderful witness to what He was in His own Person. The synagogue suggests a place where people are familiar with Scripture, know all about the terms, and are in a place of profession; but it turns out to be a place where the Lord could do nothing, no mighty works. Do you think we believe that all powers, exercised in the world to come, are available now? Mark 5 shows the power in the Lord to subdue all things to Himself, to meet the whole condition; whether it was the active power of evil, or conscious weakness seen in the woman, or unresponsive affection set forth in the dead damsel.

Ques Is that the subject-matter of service today?

CAC Yes. It makes me think of a sign I once saw over an optician's shop — 'Difficult cases sought for'. Chapter 5 is a wonderful education for the disciples in the ability of the Lord to deal with difficult cases. Each of these cases was beyond human aid. No one could subdue the demoniac, and no one could heal the woman, and they laughed at the idea of anything being done for the damsel. These things show how conditions which exist on man's side can be divinely dealt with. The Lord has been presented as the Sower: He brings in the thoughts of God and all that has power to be fruitful for God in the souls of men. Then the Lord is seen as the Sleeper; He has sown the seed and it is left to God to give the increase. The Lord does not, as seen in this parable, actually promote growth, but God gives increase when He sows. Then apart from the question of sowing and fruit for God there are terrible conditions existing on the part of man, and it needs to be known whether there is power in God to deal with them. I suppose everyone who has had exercise, a history with God, has gone through chapter 5. In exercise we have to learn that there is an active energy of evil with us which no efforts of our own can subdue — that is the power of will. We have all had to learn what it is to have a will that is satanic in character, an entire lack of subjection to God which cannot be

controlled. Then we have all had experience of weakness. When there begins to be a desire to live for God and to please God there is an experience of weakness. Then what is, in one sense, more dreadful; we have to be divinely awakened to find that, where there is such a blessed love on God's part, there is no response in our hearts. The Lord has ability to bring all this about.

There is power in the Lord; I may not have utilised it, but it is there. There is power vested in the Lord to deliver from the active energy of man's fallen will, and from weakness pertaining to the flesh, to bring into relationship with God and also to quicken affections.

Ques Such an experience prepares the ground for the seed to take effect?

CAC Yes. This exercise rather indicates how that is brought about. He presents to us in the previous chapter the thought that by the operation of God on the divine side there would be steady and continuous growth — first the blade, then the ear, and then full corn in the ear. On the divine side that is the normal condition; but the Lord also indicates that there are certain hindrances on our side, and He points them out; these hindrances need to be discerned and overcome.

Our need is forcibly brought home to us as we perceive the supply and resource available for us — that is the way the Lord brings about the sense of need. It is a serious thing to have a small thought of the resource available. What comes out in the opening verses of chapter 6 is that there were people who had thoughts of Christ, and were conversant with His words and works of power — they speak of them — but notwithstanding that they had a natural and human thought of Him. We are all liable to that. It is much the condition that is found in the synagogue, the sphere of public profession today. There is a general knowledge of Christ there; people accept that there is such a Person and that He did wonderful works, but they have a natural and human thought of Him — "Is not this the carpenter?" The testimony to all available in Christ has to be carried on in the face of such conditions. It is very exercising that the Lord should say, "A prophet is not despised save in his own country, and among his kinsmen, and in his own house". I suppose the Lord feels that even today. It is in the place where the Lord is known that He is most despised.

Ques Satan has engendered low thoughts of Christ in those who profess His name, and we have to keep clear of that in our spirits?

CAC True thoughts of Christ will adjust everything. After all, the supreme question is, "What think ye of Christ?"

Ques Is the synagogue scene expressive of christendom?

CAC Yes, it suggests that thought to me, especially in this gospel. The sphere of public profession is marked first by the presence of an unclean spirit, a spirit that will not recognise the Holy Spirit: christendom is full of that unclean spirit. Then it is marked by the presence here of a man whose hand is withered; that is inability to utilise what is provided by the grace of God. Then here we see it is a sphere where there are very low and natural thoughts of Christ. That exposes the character of the profession, and, if there is to be any divine activity in it, it must be sovereign activity. The Lord does not act there as He does in the sympathetic atmosphere indicated in the house, which is contrasted with the synagogue. In the house He acts in the midst of those who are sympathetic with Him. We can discern what the synagogue conditions are, public profession, but it is our exercise to preserve house conditions.

Ques What do you mean by house conditions?

CAC Conditions sympathetic with the Lord, and where what is in Him can be utilised. He went into the house and they told Him of Simon's wife's mother. It was a sympathetic atmosphere and they all wanted her to be healed. Then we find further on that the disciples were sitting in a circle round Him, they were doing the will of God; that marks house conditions. One would like to be enlarged on that line.

Rem It is a mark of grace that even in synagogue conditions the presence of God is not absolutely shut out.

CAC Yes. The Lord did work in each case, though greatly limited in this chapter. He could do no mighty works there, and He marvelled at it. The Lord only marvelled twice: once at the greatness of faith, and the other time at the greatness of unbelief.

The way to meet synagogue conditions is not to attack them, but to live so in the joy of house conditions that one has power to meet synagogue conditions.

Ques What is the bearing of the sabbath day in the synagogue?

CAC The people were carrying on what was outwardly: connected with the sabbath without at all understanding its true character before God. I believe the Lord is never mentioned in connection with the sabbath except to record the fact that He violated their thoughts as to it.

The sabbath day was to be for God, a little foretaste of the day when He will have a scene of rest responsive to Himself before His eyes. The solemn thing is that the One is here who is God manifest in flesh and all they can do is to sneer at Him. There is a similar scene in John 10. They were celebrating the feast of the dedication of Jehovah's temple, and He was there in the midst, but

all they could say was, "He has a demon". It was the absolute enmity of the human heart.

The second section of the chapter from verse 7 seems to indicate an extension of service. The Lord was not to be alone in the service.

Ques Why did they go out two by two?

CAC It seemed to be the Lord's way. Two witnesses were required for adequate testimony in Israel. I think the principle of partnership and working together is important.

Ques He chose the twelve that they should be with Him, and go forth. Was the period of being with Him for their education?

CAC Yes, the disciples were educated, and we all are, by observing how the Lord does things. Practically none of us can serve beyond the measure that we have been served; that is the measure of our service.

Ques Would Paul's experience be a presentation of chapter 5?

CAC Yes, I think energy of will was never more manifested than in Saul of Tarsus. No man ever discovered in a deeper way his own weakness when he desired to do good, and he learned what it was to be in a state of death; he had gone through it experimentally. No doubt it brought him to the point that, as to his life in flesh, he lived it by the faith of the Son of God.

Ques What is the lesson in verses 8 and 9?

CAC The importance of going forth without human supply, with only a staff. The scrip and bread and money in verse 12 would indicate human resources of various kinds; in the path of service nothing is needed but a staff, but in Luke you do not even need that. In Matthew, Mark and Luke there is a great difference in the directions given.

Ques What does the staff imply?

CAC It suggests to me that with divine support the servant can be independent of all that is human and natural in the way of resource. In Luke he is not to take a staff; it seems there that the message he carries carries him. Perhaps it might help to see the difference between this and what the Lord said at the end of His ministry. He reminds them of this commission, "When I sent you ... lacked ye anything?" Now, He says, You must provide for yourselves. In the Lord going away they were to be marked as having resources of their own, indicating spiritual resources; they had to see to it that they were competently furnished with spiritual resources when the Lord was

about to leave them here. But in this chapter they were sent out to be entirely unsupported by human resources. The one lesson would precede the other.

Ques The Lord healed a few infirm persons and the disciples many?

CAC Yes, it reminds one of "the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do", John 14: 12. Those that the Lord sends forth are provided with oil. There was a good supply of oil, and therefore things can be extended. The presence of the Spirit gives an extended character of things, but when the Lord was here things were very limited as regards Himself. When the Spirit came there was an extended character of things all over the world. It is the character of this gospel that the enemy's attempts to stay the flow of the river of grace only cause it to overflow its banks.

A question has been raised as to the difference in the gospels as to the equipment of the servants when sent forth. The servants were shod with sandals here, whereas in Matthew they did not have them. In Matthew the word for sandals is different from that in Mark; it is more shoes in Matthew, that which covers the feet. One can see that in serving the divine support is absolutely essential, and one wonders whether in Luke the support of the servant is regarded as found in the message which he carries.

Ques Would the attire be in keeping with the work in verse 13?

CAC Yes, it would suggest the spiritual equipment; they were possessed with a good stock of oil. They anointed with oil those who were infirm and healed them.

Ques Would the possession of oil indicate spiritual ability to put souls in touch with Christ? One feels it much easier to point out doctrine than to link the soul with Christ.

CAC To be able to anoint others would imply that you had a surplus stock of oil. In Matthew 25 there was not enough oil to give out to others. There is the thought in Scripture of being anointed with fresh oil.

Ques Could you tell us anything about the disciples entering into a house in verse 10?

CAC The Lord seems to undertake to furnish a place for His servants where they would find reception. I suppose the servant, if divinely guided, would never go into a house that he would have to leave. Where the servants are received in the true character there would be no need to leave the house; a good deal depends on how we are received. These servants are received in the equipment and furnishing with which the Lord sent them forth, and every house would be open to such servants. Sometimes we are not suitably attired,

and so we are received in another character than what the Lord would give us — hence difficulties arise. It is a great thing to come at the outset in the true spiritual light which the Lord would have before people.

Ques Why does the instance of Herod and John the baptist come in at this point?

CAC It comes in a striking way between the servants being sent out and their return. It would seem as though there was a good deal of instruction in this incident as to the character of the scene where the service is to be rendered. It is not the religious sphere here, but there is conscience. Herod listened to John, he had a certain regard for him, but the ruling principle of his being exposed him to the influence of what is satanic and it ended in murder. Self-gratification may expose one to satanic influence in a way we little anticipate.

Ques Is not Herod like Pilate here?

CAC Yes, he was carried off his feet. Conscience was active, and there was a certain respect for what was of God, but the ruling principle was self-gratification and that exposed him to this murderous influence.

We find these actings in the sphere of evil influence, and then we find the apostles gathered to Jesus and telling Him what they had done and what they had taught. It is well to be moving in a line of things that He can be told all about. Perhaps our telling Him what we do and teach would be more effectual for our own good than what we do or teach.

Ques Whatever the time our sabbaths must be kept "Come ye apart and rest awhile". Though a great harvest occasion, yet the sabbath must be kept?

CAC Yes, but does it not suggest that opportunities afforded were not exactly of a spiritual character — it was all a distraction — "coming and going". You do not get that with genuine souls; there is no coming and going if they have spiritual exercises, but a coming and following. A lot of people come and go; it is an unspiritual character of movement; it is only a distraction that does not call out the sympathies and compassion of the Lord. He regards it as a distraction and calls His servants apart from it. When there is a crowd with need He has compassion and takes up shepherd-care for them.

Ques How would you apply coming and going now?

CAC I should think coming to meetings and listening to ministry and going back to the old manner of life, not entering on a different path of life. Coming and going only hinders feeding; there was no leisure even to eat. There may be a good deal of religious activity, going to meetings and listening to ministry, which is distracting — it is only coming and going so the Lord has to call His

servants apart to rest awhile. This movement seems to bring to light those who were conscious of the need of shepherd-care. The people who followed on foot got food; the crowd never went away, they had to be dismissed. There was no spirit of coming and going in this crowd; they ran on foot. The Lord took account of them as those having need, and all the resources of Zion were there. Externally it was a wilderness, but all the resources of Zion were there; the provision was abundantly blessed and the needy satisfied with bread.

The Lord dismissed the crowd because this was only a provisional thing; the time for Israel's blessing had not come. That order of things had to be dismissed, but the wealthy provision was there and available.

We cannot doubt that the wisdom of God has given us this wonderful presentation of His Son, not simply that we should see the personal character of His service, but that we should learn the character of the service of God in grace towards man. That is the character of service that continues, and in which we may through grace have part.

Rem The disciples said, "Send them away".

CAC Yes, it showed the measure of their compassion, the measure to which they could rise. The day was spent, it was a desert place, and they said, Send the people away to buy for themselves. That was the measure of their compassion! I think that God takes account of its being a desert place; if one may say so, that is ever pressing on the heart of God,

awakening the compassions of God. There is nothing here naturally that ministers to what man truly is as an intelligent moral being, set in relation to God.

Ques Does that character of service continue today?

CAC I think so. I think the same blessed character of service that was seen in the Son of God is certainly not to cease. We read in Mark 1, "Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God", but there is nothing about the end. It indicates in the service of the Son of God in grace that a new character of service is initiated, brought in, and that God will continue it. Though He goes to the right hand of God, yet He is still working with His servants.

Rem Things remain abnormal.

CAC Yes, God is rejected; that is the character of things in the world. We must remember that the God who has drawn near to man has been rejected; it is not only God's anointed Man who has been rejected, but the God who was here in the service of grace in His beloved Son has been rejected. That has not changed the heart of God. The Lord's compassions are great, but then He

loves to have His disciples in partnership with Him, so He says, "Give *ye* them to eat" — He puts it on them. So the question is raised, Have we anything good to set before people, to give them divine satisfaction in a world of drought and dearth like this? We should take stock of our resources, what we have ourselves; never mind what can be found elsewhere. The disciples always had something and always sufficient to meet the case. Every true believer on the Lord Jesus Christ in principle has a stock sufficient.

Rem In John 4 the disciples went to buy food.

CAC They did not understand the reserves that were there. The Lord had plenty to eat without going into the city, and to drink without dipping into the well. The disciples proved this when they came back. We often fail in taking account of what we have, through being occupied with what we have not.

Ques What about the widow in Elisha's day?

CAC It is a divine principle that God uses what we have and can multiply it to any extent. If we were more spiritually anxious to take stock and see what we really have, we should find it sufficient.

Ques What would you say you have if you were asked?

CAC We are all able to say we have five loaves and two fishes. Surely there are five loaves and two fishes here tonight.

Ques What would that suggest to you?

CAC Evidently in Scripture bread is God's supply to strengthen the heart of man. The bread sets forth Christ as the wonderful provision of grace for man. My impression is that the disciples were possessed of that; they had learned in their affections to identify every promise in the Old Testament with that Person who was among them. They believed that He was the Christ. Five is connected in Scripture with grace, and five is the number characteristic of man. God has stamped the number five on man; He has given him five fingers, five toes and five senses. In the five loaves we see that all that man needs to set him up in service or walk is provided in a Man — in Christ. The promises in the Old Testament were like God sowing a seed for a wonderful harvest to furnish bread for man; it all springs up and becomes real in the Person of Christ. In that Person there is a full supply for the need of man; we cannot think of any need of man that is not fully answered in Christ. The disciples had that; they were unintelligent and their apprehension of it feeble perhaps, but among the disciples there was a sense that all God's promises were abundantly realised in Christ, and that there was a full supply of food for man. Have we a sense of that? Is there anyone here who has not a sense of that in his soul? The

feeblest can have it. God has provided everything to satisfy man in Christ; He has brought it in in grace, and furnishes that to feed the multitude. He has brought it in in the midst of these terrible conditions. Look at the religious world today — is it not a desert? There is a famine in the religious world. Every year there is more of the profane world brought into the religious world, which is a testimony to the dearth that is there. They are obliged to bring something into the professing church, which only proves that, instead of being amply supplied, there is a dearth, so that people have to go outside to the dust and ashes of this world.

Ques What about the grass here?

CAC When things get into the hands of the Lord He provides conditions of comfort. Although it is a desert place we find that there is green grass there, and the people sit on it. We ought to realise how well set up we are in the administration of the Lord. We are greatly occupied with the smallness of things, and I admit it is a day of small things. There is not much intelligence or gift — not even a man, only a lad. People say, 'There is only two hundred pennyworth of bread, I do wish there was some lad a bit bigger who would have brought more loaves', but the thing is to get what is in the hands of the lad into the hands of the Lord; it will go all right then. It is John's gospel that tells us about the lad; here it is more on general lines; the disciples as a company had this supply. John gives more the detail of it; he shows that a lad has the loaves, and emphasises the outward smallness and insignificance of things.

Ques Is what is not available in the country round always to be found in the desert?

CAC What strikes me is that you get all the wealth of Zion in the desert, "I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her needy ones with bread", Psalm 132: 15. Because there is nothing of Zion in the desert, it is possible for all Zion's wealth to be there. He is there and He takes up the little and multiplies it to any extent.

Ques Ecclesiastical conditions cannot take that into account?

CAC No, the savour of that wonderful wealth of divine grace is not apprehended at all in that which gives place to man. How could it be? We do not find the Lord feeding the multitude in Jerusalem or in any of the great cities; it is where conditions are manifestly desert conditions that the Lord brings out the fulness of His own Person and grace, and that holds good today.

The two fishes suggest that, not only is there a provision in grace for man, but that man is to be secured for the pleasure of God. This is suggested by the general tenor of what we get in the New Testament — the fish are taken out of their natural elements and surroundings and they are taken out for God. The Lord speaks to His servants of their becoming fishers of men, and He speaks of the nets, and suggests that, even from the restless sea of this world, God is to secure something for Himself. There is a testimony to it in the presence of the disciples here; the fish are part of their administration as food. There are two sides to the gospel: one side tells me what is in Christ for me, full provision of bread to satisfy me, and the other side is how God secures by the work of His Spirit what is for His own pleasure in man. The whole ministry of the Lord is covered by those two things; it is what the disciples were furnished with, the five loaves and the two fishes; that is what was to be ministered. Do you think anything will satisfy the soul of man but the reality of those two things? God has provided in Christ everything that man needs to completely satisfy him, and on the other hand God is working in the power of His grace and Spirit so that man may be for His pleasure. We must have both sides of the gospel.

Ques Everyone in the kingdom has the two sides?

CAC These two things constitute the kingdom; a full provision for man, and a full provision for God. We shall not be in God's kingdom if we have not these two things. These two exercises are found in the souls of men as soon as they are touched by the finger of grace. They have needs which must be met, and they learn that those needs are fully met by God's provision in grace in Christ. But there is also the feeling, 'I want to be for God'; it is part of the exercise of everyone born again. I only learn what God is for me to become exercised about how I can be for God. God has made provision for that, not only provision to satisfy me, but He has made provision to satisfy Himself, and to have man for Himself, taken out of the restless sea of this world. This is the character of service you cannot serve men as to their souls any other way. What else offers a man satisfaction as to the deep cravings of his soul in relation to God?

Ques Would you say a word as to the green grass?

CAC If people are not restful they cannot get the good of the spiritual food provided. The loaves and fishes have to get into the Lord's hands first — that is important. I may have loaves and fishes, but they will not multiply in my hand, only in the hand of the Lord. He looks up to heaven and links it with the grace of heaven, and there is enough for everybody. His administration makes everybody comfortable, and they sit down on the green grass. One often feels

when the saints come together that they do not sit down; if they are thinking of worries they are not sitting down in their spirits. The Lord would make us to sit down, that there might be satisfaction for every needy soul.

Ques In Psalm 23 we have the green pastures under the care of the Lord as Shepherd. Would not that have a stilling effect on our spirits?

CAC Yes, indeed, He leads into green pastures and waters of quietness; that is just what the Lord does. He never leads the spirits of His saints to be perturbed and agitated; He makes them to lie down.

Rem He distributed the bread first.

CAC That is right. The whole ministry of the Lord is covered by these two things. He taught them many things — He showed that all was provided by God for man, and He also had a great deal to say as to the way man was to be secured for the pleasure of God — these two things covered all His ministry.

Ques Why did the Lord divide the bread first?

CAC Because things must begin on that side. We must learn first what the provision of Zion is, He abundantly blesses her provision in Zion, the city of royal grace; everything is provided. Every promise of God was substantiated in Christ risen from the dead; that is presented to men for them to feed on.

Ques That is necessary before you know about the compassions of God?

CAC I think the compassions of God come out in Zion, because when they had forfeited everything and God had forsaken the tabernacle in Shiloh — the tent He had placed among them, God in perfect compassion chose Zion. He says, "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell". God finds a place where He can dwell amongst men in pure and perfect grace. The provision of Zion is so rich, there is enough in it to meet the need of every creature under heaven.

All in this gospel of Mark is the divine college course to enable us to take up service. A man who goes through the course in this gospel will learn everything he needs to learn. If we went through this gospel on our knees we should come out fully qualified to serve God and Jesus Christ.

When God has compassion on men He has something in view. The end in view is the setting up of the testimony. That is why the incident follows about the Lord constraining the disciples to get into the ship and go before to the other side. It suggests the course that the testimony would take.

Ques What is suggested in the gathering of the fragments before they went into the ship?

CAC All this wonderful wealth of blessing has been fully presented to Israel. The divine compassions and ministry had all been presented to Israel. In the wisdom of God it was not the time for the kingdom to be restored to Israel, so the Lord dismisses the crowd. It was not the time for Israel to come into blessing: the kingdom makes provision for that in a day to come. The twelve baskets indicate that there was enough left over of the ministry of Christ to satisfy Israel in a coming day, and bring them the wealth of the kingdom — the baskets are standing waiting for them; they are waiting for the time when the kingdom will be restored to Israel. It is taken from them now, so the Lord dismisses the crowd. In the meantime the full wealth of the administration is available for the saints of the assembly; it is available now. Israel has been dismissed, the fulness of the gentiles has come in, all the wealth of the divine administration is available for us today. The remnant of Israel will take these gospels in a coming day and marvel at them. All we enjoy today they will be able to taste the blessedness of by and by in relation to their own needs. Israel will come in at the end on the line of divine compassion — "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy". The Lord dismisses the crowd, and constrains the disciples to get into a ship; He compels them. It suggests a certain unwillingness on their part. The Lord indicates in John 16 that there was with the disciples an unwillingness to lose Him, to go on in the course of the testimony without Him. The Lord indicates what is important, that there is to be a long night during which they will not have His company, and during which they will have a position of isolation from everything around them. That is the thought in a ship — an isolated position, winds and waves and everything outside contrary, the time prolonged, labour, exertion and toil in the face of adverse conditions; the Lord on high gone up to pray — that is the position of the testimony. The Lord having dismissed Israel, and reserved the twelve baskets for them in a coming day, what is going on all night? That is an important question for us, for we find ourselves in that night. There are all kinds of difficulties and oppositions here, the Lord on high is interceding and praying, and the saints are labouring to enter into the rest of God. The other side is the rest of God.

Ques Do assembly conditions come in here?

CAC It is the side and course of the testimony through this world until the morning dawns. This chapter closes a very important section of this gospel; and like many sections in Scripture it closes with the rest of God — every disease healed. Wherever the Lord goes He heals; there is power to heal: the whole state of man is set right. It is a beautiful picture of the morning when the rest of God will be brought in and everything set right. We have come to the fourth watch of the night now, it seems to me.

Ques Why did the Lord compel them to go into the ship?

CAC It suggests a certain unwillingness on their part. I think the disciples took very badly to the setting aside of Israel; they said, "Wilt thou not at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel" — they did not like it, it cut across the line of their natural and spiritual desires. The Lord said in John 16, as it were, 'I did not tell you this at the beginning, but I tell you now that you will be left face to face with conflict and opposition, and, because I have told you, sorrow fills your heart' — He had thrust them into the boat.

Ques Would you say a word about walking on the sea?

CAC Before the morning dawns and the Lord appears publicly, He makes an extraordinary movement. I do not think that christians take sufficient account of the extraordinary movements of the Lord. I am not referring to the rapture; the Lord will not pass anybody by then; that shows this is not the rapture. The Lord has not told us everything but He suggests this figure; He compels the disciples to get into the ship and go to the other side, but the extraordinary movement is that He comes down from on high, and shows Himself to His saints before His public return and before the rapture. I believe the Lord distinctly suggests to us that He is going to move in a peculiar manner in the fourth watch of the night, and we have come to that now — I am certain of that. In the fourth watch of the night the Lord makes this extraordinary movement — walking on the water. He had never done it before. There is something going on now that has not gone on for many centuries. It is the last watch, from three to six before the morning breaks, and the Lord makes this extraordinary movement which is intended to test the affections of His own. It says, He "would have passed them by". He does not come in an arbitrary way and thrust Himself on us, and He does not act publicly like the rapture. He makes as though He would have passed them by — this movement tests the affections, it is a new character of movement on the part of the Lord, and it is going on at this present time in view of all that will be brought about when the morning comes. In view of all that will happen at the rapture, the Lord is taking up in the fourth watch of the night an attitude He never took before — He walks on the water. It tests our affections; we want to understand it. It is vital for us to understand the peculiar movements of the Lord at this moment. You may say, 'I thought that Christ is at the right hand of God in heaven'. Normally that is the character of the position — the Lord on high remembering the saints in conflict and difficulty here. But in the fourth watch of the night there is something abnormal going on — the Lord walking on the water to test the affections.

Ques Is it like Laodicea?

CAC Yes, the Lord did not open the door; He knocked. He says, 'Here I am, available for you if you want Me'. So the Lord walking on the water is a test whether they want Him; He would have passed by.

Ques Does this come out at the coming together of the saints at the Supper?

CAC My impression is that the Lord has presented Himself personally to His saints during the last hundred years in a way He never did before. There has been an extraordinary movement on the part of the Lord, and the affections of the saints are being tested as to whether they realise that movement and appreciate it, or whether they are distressed and think they have seen a vision or an apparition. The present movements of the Lord are only an apparition to a great many. As the new day is in view, wonderful events are about to happen — the rapture, the great tribulation, the appearing — the most tremendous events that ever happened in the universe are about to happen, and in view of that the Lord is moving in a distinctive way, in an extraordinary manner. The question is, Do we discern it? Do we love Him?

Rem They get the word of cheer.

CAC Yes, when He manifests Himself, He says, "It is I". The peculiar church feature does not come in in Mark's gospel; we get that in Matthew, which is the church gospel. The point here is education for service. If we want to rightly serve the Lord, He would have us understand the peculiar character of His movements in the fourth watch of the night. He moves then in a way He did not in the second or third watch, but He moves in a special way in the fourth watch just before the morning. It is an extraordinary witness of the Lord's love that He should come to His own walking on the water, and show Himself as One who is superior to all the power of evil. He is able to be trusted with everything. At the end of the dispensation, after the failure and corruption of Christendom, and the setting up of man's order rather than God's, the Lord is saying, 'You trust Me, I am superior to every power of evil'. It is Philadelphia; He sets before them an opened door that no man can shut. He says, 'If you recognise my movements you will not have any fear; I am superior to the storm'.

It is of deep interest to see the special church character of privilege which comes out in Peter in Matthew's gospel. It was at this moment that Peter says, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water", and Peter in the power of affection joins the Lord. What a wonderful thing it is to think that that privilege is open to us now; it specially belongs to the fourth watch of the night. Peter represents church affections — "If it be thou, bid me come unto thee" — he tasted an extraordinary privilege. If the Lord walking on the water is an extraordinary movement on the Lord's part, it was an extraordinary

privilege on Peter's part to walk on the water to join the Lord. It is a wonderful thing when you leave all connected with the ship, what is connected with an isolated position of testimony and its conflicts and difficulties here, and you join the Lord in a spiritual region where you find all of one with Himself. That is peculiar church privilege, and church privilege is connected with the fourth watch of the night.

Ques That is Matthew's side. Is it more individual here?

CAC What we have tonight is really in connection with service. The Lord is saying, 'You cannot serve me intelligently in the fourth watch if you do not understand the extraordinary character of my movements'. We cannot serve the Lord intelligently today in the light of what was true in the third watch, that is, the Reformation. There is a peculiar character of things in the fourth watch. We cannot serve the Lord intelligently unless we know the extraordinary character of His movements in that watch.

MARK 7

Mark 7

Ques You were speaking last week about the Lord's extraordinary movements?

CAC Yes. The end of the previous chapter is a figure of the world to come, when the mighty healing power of the Lord can be known of all. In the passage across the sea we seem to see the course of the testimony in the absence of Christ: He is interceding on high, and then in the fourth watch of the night we get what immediately precedes the morning. When the Lord rejoins the disciples the storm is still, and when they reach the shore we find universal healing. I suppose, strictly speaking, it applies to the time when the Lord rejoins the remnant and by His power puts an end to all the difficulties that the testimony has had to meet during His absence. But in principle it applies to the assembly, because there is a great analogy between the movements and actings of the Lord in reference to the remnant, and His movements and actings in reference to the assembly. We suggested last week the peculiar character of the Lord's movements in the fourth watch of the night. I have no hesitation in saying that we have reached the fourth watch of the night now, so that what marks the present time is a peculiar movement of the Lord in which He presents Himself in such a way as to test the affections of those in the boat — He would have passed by. This intimates to me clearly that one may expect such movements in the fourth watch of the night. My impression is that is what is going on at the present moment; and I think Scripture warrants us in expecting what may be called extraordinary movements. In Matthew 25 there was a movement at midnight and the cry went forth, "Behold, the bridegroom". It was calling attention to a Person, not an event, and I think what happens in the fourth watch brings you a little nearer to the morning. The Lord comes walking on the water, and declares Himself in absolute supremacy, in all the power and blessedness and grace of His own Person — He is absolutely supreme. The sea is a path for Him, neither winds nor waves affect Him. He draws near in a peculiar way to test the affections of His saints. Those who have observed the Lord's movements have recognised a spiritual movement of that kind on the Lord's part for many years, a remarkable presentation of Himself to His saints. I have no doubt there have been remarkable unfoldings from the Scriptures of the Person of Christ, and of what stands connected with Him in the purpose of God, a clearing up of dispensational difficulties and development of truth, but not only that; there has been a spiritual movement of the Lord Himself which did not take place in the previous watches of the night. He was there on the mountain

top through the first and second and third watches but in the fourth there is a peculiar movement. My impression is that the test of spirituality is to a large extent ability to discern the movements of the Lord, and we shall not be intelligent as servants in the fourth watch of the night if we do not understand these movements on the part of the Lord.

The disciples were unwilling to be left behind, to face the long dark night of persecutions, oppositions and difficulties without the Lord; He has to compel them to get into the boat.

Ques Would you say that some things which have happened among us have been the movements of the Lord, some truth brought out to bring us near to the Lord?

CAC Yes, it is remarkable how conflicts have all turned on the Person of the Lord, or on matters relating to the assembly which is so near to His heart. The conflicts in the fourth watch of the night have special reference to the peculiar movements of the Lord.

Ques Would, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock" apply?

CAC It indicates the attitude the Lord has taken up in regard to that sacrificial character of things which marks the last stage of the christian profession. The Lord takes up a certain attitude in reference to it, and His attitude is to determine ours. The epistles to the churches show the Lord's attitude. If He places Himself at the door and appeals to the affections, it is the attitude the saints should take up in regard to the self-sufficient and boastful profession; the service of the saints should be to wait on that character of things in case there should be any response.

Paul says, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed". The fourth watch is nearer the morning than the first watch.

Ques Is there a danger of our letting the Lord pass by?

CAC There is a danger of our missing the peculiar privilege of association with Christ the Son of God, outside the contrarieties and difficulties which the testimony has to face. It is possible to get outside the testimony. That is a peculiar church privilege that we should be able to join the Lord. In relation to the testimony the Lord draws near in His power to give all needed support, so the testimony is carried through in spite of all the opposition it has to meet — that is more the thought in Mark. It is like Philadelphia; there is something the Lord can support. The Lord says, "I have set before thee an opened door".

Ques What do you mean by getting outside the testimony?

CAC If you touch the privilege of being in association with Christ before His God and Father, that is outside the testimony. It is spiritual privilege of the highest order; it qualifies you for the testimony, but in its spiritual privilege it is outside the toils, conflicts and difficulties of the testimony. It is just like the difference between "I ascend" and "I send", John 20. The testimony is connected with "I send"; the privilege is connected with "I ascend". If we ascend we are outside the testimony in holy, heavenly privilege. I think the enjoyment of privilege qualifies us for testimony; the more familiar I am inside the more competent I am outside. If we have the consciousness of joining the Lord, He is before us — "if it be thou, bid me come unto thee". It is not exactly faith; it is a question of affection. These are the movements you would expect if the Lord loves the assembly — "Christ loved the assembly". Just as the Father sent the Son into the world, so the Lord sends His own into the world, but He sends from the place of privilege.

In this chapter we return to the consideration of the moral state of those who pretend to have the highest privileges. This is obviously the beginning of a new section in the gospel; it begins with the complete exposure of what was outwardly in the place of privilege — that is the moral character of Jerusalem that now is. There were certain ideas of purity in the christian profession, but they are not spiritual ideas: they are things that have no spiritual value and that lead to the setting aside of the commandments of God. Human thoughts of purity always result in the setting aside of something which is obligatory as part of God's will. The Lord would have His disciples perfectly free from tradition. It is important for us to learn this. The disciples did not need to be instructed about washing of hands, they were free from all that, and the Lord justifies them. The word of God and the influence of the Lord Jesus in the soul must have the effect of emancipating us from tradition without thinking about it. It is blessed to escape from all traditions and all that is external because we have come under the influence of the Son of God. There is a whole system of external things today that does not contain a spiritual element, and it is a great thing to be free from it.

How could we serve the Lord if not free from it! External purity of this kind that is of man may go along with what positively sets aside the commandments of God.

Ques "If ye love me, keep my commandments" — that is a test of spirituality?

CAC Yes, "If any one thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him recognise the things that I write to you, that it is the Lord's commandment", 1 Corinthians 14: 37. That is the test.

All this is education for us in relation to the service of the Lord; we need to be freed from all that is external and to get to the spiritual import of things. It would appear that the Pharisees had taken up such a chapter as Leviticus 11 in a literal way merely, not understanding the spiritual import at all, not knowing God. There is a contrast marked in this chapter between people with pretensions in regard to outward detail and purity, having no knowledge of God or spiritual intuitions, and a poor outcast woman with no pretensions to external purity but a remarkable knowledge of God. That is the contrast that God puts before us in this chapter. The Lord would have us with understanding, so He says to the disciples, 'Are ye thus unintelligent?' The Lord would have us with spiritual understanding of things, formed by our knowledge of God, so that we know what we are doing and why we do it. The great point in this chapter is understanding; the Lord says here, "Do ye not perceive?" We might go on with externals; we have all been baptised, and many break bread — all these things are externals, but the value lies in our spiritual understanding of the import of them. Everything we do should be done with spiritual understanding; without this even the breaking of bread may be external. Everything is merely external to me if I do not understand its moral relation to God. In the Scriptures all the instructions are spiritual; "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that is treading out corn. Is God occupied about the oxen, or does he say it altogether for our sakes?" When you see this you see what is in the mind of God, and see there is some precious moral instruction, some spiritual import in everything God has ordained, so you begin to be exercised to get the import of it. The assembly is composed of intelligent persons — "Judge ye what I say". Paul regarded the assembly as capable of forming a judgment on everything he said. If a brother gives out a hymn, he ought to be able to say why he gave it out, and not simply to say, 'It was a nice hymn and it came into my mind'. That is not intelligent; we ought to know why we do it. Nothing should have a place in the assembly that is not the product of spiritual understanding.

It is a blessed deliverance to see what the heart of man is; the Lord lays it bare. If I accept the Lord's exposure, I shall never again trust my heart for a moment. Then you see a woman with a remarkable knowledge of what is in the heart of God. The Pharisees are occupied about bread, but are despising the wonderful Loaf that was among them. The woman had such a sense of the character of that Loaf that she says, 'One crumb of that Loaf will do for me'.

The Lord retires from this scene when He has exposed the true character of Jerusalem. In this gospel He does not go to Jerusalem until He goes to suffer and die; He retires from it. He has exposed the outward pretence to purity and

the inward corruption of what man is, though in outward pretence to purity — inside nothing but corruption — no appreciation of God. The Lord leaves it and goes down to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and keeps Himself out of sight — He would not that any one should know it. It seems to me the Lord's movements always had reference to the Father's work in souls — "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work". He had come to finish what the Father had begun; the Lord's movements were all in view of the Father's work. The Father had worked in that poor woman and had given her a proper estimate of her heart and of His character. The Lord puts her to the test. He goes to the house and He would not have anyone know it, but He could not be hid. You cannot hide the Lord from the blessed exercise and confession produced by the Father's work in souls. Look what a sense this woman had of what the heart of God was. She could stand any amount of testing. Self was obliterated in the sense she had of the presence of God; she was ready to be a dog in the sense of God's goodness. The Father works, and the Son comes in to take hold of what the Father has wrought, and to bring it out to completion.

To learn to estimate things according to what God is, is the most priceless blessing that could be conferred on man. To be able to understand things in relation to what God is would clear us from all externals at once.

The disciples asked the Lord to explain this parable, for they were still without understanding. They had got clear of washing by what they had learned as taught of God in the company of Jesus, but they did not understand that what entered in did not defile. Peter did not learn this until after he received the Spirit. We are often proved unintelligent because we do not look at things in relation to God, and estimate them by the knowledge we have of God in our souls. Paul says to the Corinthians, "Some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame". 'You ought to be ashamed that you know God so little'. If the Lord exposes a defect it is always with the thought of removing it. The Lord never works on negative lines; He always has a positive end in view.

Ques Is the Father always first in dealing with a soul?

CAC Yes. We belonged to the Father before we belonged to Christ. "Thine they were and thou gavest them me". The Lord falls back on the Father's work, and that is what we have to fall back on. All externals, and what the natural man can take up, will break down and fail, but the Father's work will not.

A great deal of our religion is traditional, more than we think. Things have been generally accepted for many years, and we go on with them, but when challenged suddenly we do not know what to say. We go on in traditional

lines, instead of having the knowledge of God and understanding the spiritual import of things. We do things because they were done by the ancients, and because we have always done them. There is not much for God in that.

Mark 7 is obviously the beginning of a new section in the gospel. We see the heart of man exposed with his religious pretensions. The Lord discerns it all plainly. God is looking at man's *heart*. Such a state as is described is really spiritually Tyre and Sidon, and the Lord intimates this by going there. He does not go publicly, for it was not part of the public ways of God to evangelise Tyre and Sidon, but He puts the infinite goodness of God within reach of the utterly undeserving; helpless need finds out the heart of God. The Lord seeks to bring out in the Syrophenician woman the depth of the work of God. He uses slighting language — even a term of contempt — to bring to light that God could secure what truly honoured him in a Syrophenician woman while the children were full of hypocritical pretensions. It is the sovereign working of God brought to light in one who was not yet the subject of any public testimony, one who had no privilege of the children's place, but who knew the Father in a way that the 'children' did not. She has to accept the sovereignty of God that had given the house of Israel peculiar privilege. The Lord does not speak to her of how the children were treating Him and missing everything, nor does she question the children's privilege. But she lays right hold of what God was; her own worthlessness and undeservingness only magnify what He was. What a blessed service to uncover such a working of God in the human heart! The same One who could and did uncover all the evil of man's heart could also uncover what God wrought there, and He delights to serve in such a way as to bring it to light. That is the character of His service here. "Because of this word". It is really the divine value of what came out of her heart that secured the deliverance of her daughter. All the circumstances show the work to be purely of God. A heart that honours God, and that loses all its own importance in the sense of what He is, is very precious to God.

Then He returns to carry on His service in Galilee. The woman could hear and speak right; and the Lord returns to produce a similar state in the remnant that came under His touch. Taking the deaf man apart (verse 33) would indicate the intense individuality of the Lord's service. Do not be content to be amongst christians and go on with others! Have your own personal history so that you can recount what the Lord has done for your soul. His fingers would indicate His skill. The heavens are the work of His fingers; how perfect they are! It is said of the prince's daughter that the roundings of her thighs are "the work of the hands of an artist". His movements are with such grace that it is evident that her limbs have been fashioned by a skilful hand. Have we sufficiently considered that the way we hear is to be the evidence of the skill

of the Son of God? How much we forget! People take things just opposite to what is said! “Ye are become dull in hearing”. Then He spat; this would have more to do with the inward virtue of His Person. “Let your word be always with grace, seasoned with salt”, Colossians 4: 6. It would seem to suggest that He would make us to speak as He spoke, that He would touch our tongues with the virtue of His inward grace. “With their tongues they have used deceit; asps’ poison is under their lips”, Romans 3: 13. What a contrast to have the inward grace of Christ affecting our tongues! It is really what comes out of Him — His Spirit. I think the Jew had a great idea of the sanctity of the spittle of a holy man. The Lord takes all up in relation to heaven. What is it to heaven if we do not hear or speak right? The Lord takes up all the deep inward exercises of it, even as He did fully on the cross. Then He speaks the word of power.

MARK 8

Mark 8

Ques Is there any link between the incident of the boat, and the healing of the blind man, and what we see of the disciples in this chapter?

CAC I thought so. We see that there was a certain knowledge of Christ with the disciples, but I think it rather corresponded with the imperfect vision of the blind man after the first touch; and the Lord was intimating that the divine thought was that they should see clearly.

Ques "Having eyes, see ye not? And having ears, hear ye not?" (verse 18).

CAC Yes, they had not rightly understood what is set forth in the loaves. It was a failure to see clearly, and that is often the case with believers now. The wonderful lessons connected with the five loaves and the seven loaves, and the one loaf, are most important, the Lord would have us perceive clearly and definitely what they set forth.

Ques What are the lessons?

CAC Lessons on the greatness of Christ in His availability for His people. If we learn them clearly we shall not have exaggerated ideas of men, nor shall we savour the things that are of men.

Ques Would they preserve us from over-carefulness about the supply with which to feed the multitude? The disciples were concerned because they had only one loaf.

CAC What more could they want than the one Loaf? I have no doubt the loaves in each case set forth Christ. The five loaves speak of Christ as God's provision in grace for Israel on the line of promise. The promises in the Old Testament had indicated that there would be a full supply for all the need of Israel. The Lord had said of Zion, "I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread". The harvest of all the promises is gathered up in Christ, and this is set forth in the five loaves — a full supply on the line of promise. Then in chapter 7 we see that the heirs of promise prove themselves utterly unworthy of the grace of God and had forfeited all title to the promises, so the state of heart exposed here is worse than that of the gentile nations. Then the Lord uncovers the work of God in the heart of a poor gentile dog. He was exposing, not only the wretched sin and folly of man, but what God was working in secret. In the Syrophenician woman there was no ground of claim to the promises, but as taught of God she laid claim to all that God was in Himself as a supply for man's need. This is what the seven loaves set forth.

When there is no title to the promises, a claim can be put in entirely on the ground of what God is in Himself; and that is perfect. That is the seven loaves. All depends on what God is and not on what man is. God showed that His goodness would overflow to those outside the children of promise. It is a very solemn lesson that those who were the children of the promises had forfeited all right to them. The point of chapter 7 is that all depends on what God is in His nature. God is so good that, though He had committed Himself to the children, He could not say there was not enough for the dogs. Then in the end of that chapter the man who could not hear nor speak right became a witness to the skilfulness of Christ, and these are the elements of perfection. On the one side all depends on what God is in Himself, which is all available for man; and on the other side all depends on the skilfulness of Christ. This is the ground of blessing for all men. You could not limit what God, is, nor what Christ is, to Israel — the number four has universal bearing. It seems to me the Lord brings in the second feeding on these lines. He would have the remnant, those who had continued with Him, nourished. They had been with Him three days. *These* were not as sheep having no shepherd; they were with the Shepherd and He cared for and fed them. There is a necessity that we should be inwardly strengthened and nourished upon all that Christ is as setting forth the perfection of good in the blessed God and the perfection of the skilfulness of Christ's own hand. We are to be nourished on Christ in that character.

Then the "one loaf" is Christ in His complete personal sufficiency for His own. His own do not need anything else, neither the leaven of the Pharisees nor the leaven of Herod; the one loaf suffices to meet every exigency that will arise in the course of the testimony. The five loaves and the seven loaves go out widely, the first feeding to the whole width of Israel, for the twelve baskets suggest administration in Israel. The second feeding goes wider still, to all men; the "four thousand" points to what is universal, and the seven loaves to perfection in the way of supply for man. That could not be limited to Israel; it was a big supply, too. These were big baskets; the others were small baskets such as you could carry in one hand. These were very big baskets, these might perhaps take two or three men to carry. The Lord wants us to see all these things clearly with the eyes of our hearts, so that we might be definite about our appreciation of Christ.

Ques What would the second touch of the blind man suggest?

CAC My impression is that it involves the reception of the Spirit. The first touch is the influence of Christ Himself, which the disciples had really known.

They had received a measure of vision, but we see again and again how imperfect it was.

Rem Peter had imperfect vision in verse 32.

CAC Yes, for he was savouring the things that are of men. If there is imperfect vision, the things of men get an undue place with us. If a man looks like a tree he is a very conspicuous object. We have to guard against anything that would inflate men or make them conspicuous.

Ques Why do you think the Lord did not give the blind man the complete touch at first? He could have made him see clearly with one touch.

CAC I think the Lord wanted to give us a picture which would enable us to understand the condition in which the disciples were found at the time, and a picture that would explain our own condition sometimes. There is often an apprehension of Christ together with an inflated appreciation of man; and if a man is great in his own eyes we might take him at his face value.

Ques Do we not want to have a right appreciation of the men of God?

CAC Yes, but Paul said, "Who then is Apollos, and who Paul? Ministering servants, through whom ye have believed, and as the Lord has given to each". Paul repudiates what would make men conspicuous, and will not have anything but that they were servants through whom the Corinthians believed.

Ques Why did the Lord lead the man out of the village?

CAC It indicated that He was not now dealing with Israel generally, but was morally separating those who came under His hand from Israel as a whole.

Ques What does the spitting indicate?

CAC That the Lord brings to bear on the man all the inward virtue of His own Person. It was so with the disciples; He had brought to bear on them a wonderful sense of the virtue that was in Himself, and it had affected them all. The vision they got was the result of this.

Ques The Lord instructed him to go back to his house and not to go back to the village.

CAC Yes, He would give us an understanding of the position. If He led the man out of the village He certainly intimated that He did not intend him to go back there. In this gospel the Lord constantly retires from publicity, He shuns it. He more often here enjoins people not to speak of what had been done for them; it was activity in obscurity.

This chapter is the turning point of the gospel. The disciples were not to speak of Him now as the Christ: He is now the suffering Son of man. A new path is opened up, a path connected with the cross, and losing one's life instead of saving it, and not being ashamed of the Son of man. It needs clear spiritual vision in order to take this path. No one will say goodbye to all that a man naturally loves unless he has seen something that eclipses it all; but the heart may become so affected by the Christ, so drawn after Him, that it is prepared to take exactly the opposite course to what it would naturally choose. There was true faith and a true appreciation of Christ in Peter, but he had not vision clear enough to enter on this path: his mind was on the things which are of men. We are being instructed in service here, and there is only one path in which we can truly serve God now — the path indicated in this chapter. But to enter that path there must be a motive — the true appreciation of Christ as presented in this chapter, in the character of the Christ and the Son of man. The Lord asks His disciples in verse 27, "Who do men say that I am?" We find that all the opinions quoted here have a favourable form, all give some degree of honour to Christ, but none apprehend the truth of His Person. It is like the religious world today: it gives Christ a certain honour, but not the unique place of God's anointed Man, for that would displace every other man; everything for God's pleasure must be after the pattern of His anointed Man. If Peter had had a clear vision of that Man, his mind would not have been on the things of men. He reached it for a moment when he confessed that Jesus was the Christ, but that was not maintained.

Ques How would the knowledge of Christ affect us in service?

CAC In this way. It is a wonderful thing to see that there is only one Man for the pleasure of God, only one Man anointed. "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him", Psalm 89: 19, 20. We get the sense that He was the only Man for God's pleasure and that every man not in accord with Him is to God's displeasure. The knowledge of this gives character to service; it leads to a person denying himself, because self is certainly not Christ. What a lesson to learn! It prepares one for the pathway of rejection and reproach and denying oneself, losing one's life. Peter was not prepared to accept that Christ would be rejected by the great spiritual leaders of the nation; they had a place in his mind, and he savoured the things that were of men and became an adversary. The secret of it all was that Peter had not maintained his first convictions, and that is the difficulty with us, too. Peter had said to the Lord, "I am a sinful man"; if that conviction had been maintained he would have felt the necessity for death, but here he had lost the sense of it and would hinder the Lord in that path. Before the Lord

answers him, He looks at the disciples. It is beautiful to see that affectionate glance at them before He turns and calls Peter Satan. It was as much as to say, 'What is to become of them if I do not go on to death!' He loved them. Then He turns and rebukes the adversary. The Man of God's pleasure goes into death in order to put away the man of God's displeasure. Many at the beginning of their course get an intense conviction of sin, but repentance is not maintained if it is not, we become adversaries. It is one thing to have a conviction, and another to maintain it in one's soul. It is terrible to think that even the divine revelation to Peter did not improve the character of the flesh. Whatever favour God may show you or whatever gift you may be endowed with, the flesh is always ready to be puffed up over it. Look at Paul — he found he had flesh that could be puffed up at the abundance of the revelations! What an extraordinary thing that the flesh could be proud of having divine revelations! We have to learn to work out our convictions; Peter had failed to do this; he did not really know the character of the flesh until he got the Spirit of the ascended Christ.

Ques Why is it the *Son of man* must suffer?

CAC The Christ is the One on whom all the pleasure of God rests and who has the capability of bringing all into accord with His good pleasure; but the same blessed Person has come into the human family. The Son of man is a most remarkable title; the Lord used it of Himself more than any other title. He loved to call attention to the fact that He had come into manhood in order to redeem men and secure them for the pleasure of God. Having come into that state He must of necessity go into death, for every question of that state had to be taken up. He must die, and all the wide glories connected with the Son of man in divine purpose could only be taken up on the ground of His having gone into death. We need clear vision to apprehend all this, and all leads on to the kingdom of God come in power. When Christ touches the second time, it is from heaven with the Spirit, and then there is clear vision; these things are spiritually discerned. It suggests the necessity for the Spirit; not only that there should be a divine operation in man, but that the Spirit should come so that what is spiritual might have place. Then alone is it possible to deny oneself. The fact of denying self shows that what is spiritual has come in, and then there is power. This is the only way into the path of Christ; we cannot move after Christ except on that line. We cannot take up the cross until we are in His pathway, and we cannot come into that pathway without denying ourselves. We cannot say 'Yes' to Christ without saying 'No' to ourselves.

If you know Christ in the three-fold character we have had before us, you have your affections nourished, and you can say that you have found a Man

you love better than yourself, so you cannot help following in His path. The cross came in His pathway, and you take it up because He had it. You cannot take it up unless you see that it was in His pathway. When you see that you say, 'I love Him, and He had the cross, so I will bring it into my pathway'. It is not that you like *it*

but you love *Him*. We often hear people say, 'I must bear my cross'; but that is not it at all. A woman may have a bad husband, or a man have bad rheumatism, and they say that it is their cross! They cannot help themselves, but the cross is a thing I can *take*; it is left to man to take up or leave.

Ques Why is it "for my sake and the gospel's", verse 35?

CAC There are the two motives. "For my sake" means that you love Him. Taking up the cross means that you deliberately prepare yourself to take the lowest and most dishonoured place that men could give you as a reproach, because you are following One who had nothing but reproach here. The cross is the extreme of it; you would have the fulness of it if men actually took you and crucified you on a cross. To take up your cross means you are prepared for that. He had that and He says, "Follow me". We could not follow a Person we did not love. If we do not go in this pathway we are not serving God; it is the only path in which God can be served by man. The motives which lead us into it are wonderful "for my sake". How we get accustomed to the words, but "for *my* sake" — how touching it is! We may well ask ourselves, 'How much is there in my life that has been simply for Christ's sake?' It is all the love of God manifested in Christ that touches our hearts and compels us into it.

CAC That is beautiful. He becomes motive for me — I who had never imagined there was anything better than my life in this world — so that I actually should become content to lose my life! "For my sake" — it is the personal hold the Son of man has on our hearts.

Then, there is "for the gospel's". What am I prepared to suffer that there may be a sweeter, holier, more complete setting forth in me of all that God is in grace for man? What am I prepared to forgo?

Ques Is it possible for us to lay down our lives in these days? We are not put to death now for Christ's sake.

CAC Is it possible to save your life and lose it today? Then the reverse — to lose your life and save it — is possible. There is a whole system of things that constitutes my life as living in the world. If I want to save that, I lose all that might attach to my life in relation to God. Moses was one who lost his life here and saved it. I suppose there never was a man who might have had a greater life here than Moses, but he was content to lose it in Egypt. Think of all there

was in Moses' life for God! If he had chosen to save his life, what would he have gained? Nothing. He would have lost all, and had at most a big pyramid at the end! The principle of it searches us. Are we so influenced by love to Christ, and by desire that the gospel might be known in men's hearts that we are prepared to be diminished here? If so, our lives will have divine value. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world ... ?" The Lord supposes an extreme case. What is the profit, what advantage is there to me, if I lose my soul?

Ques Is it possible to lose your soul?

CAC Yes, the Lord says, "lose your soul". You have to maintain your relations with God. Can a saint make the world an object and not be a great loser? It would be dreadful to think that a christian might make the world an object, and *not* lose his soul! We know he is not lost eternally, but what secures him here? Nothing but moving in this pathway. Think what life a man has who makes the world an object! Instead of being here for all that God is and for Christ, all that might be in him of value to God and Christ is forfeited.

Paul writes to the Corinthians, "lest ... I myself should be a castaway". He is going to say something very strong, and instead of saying it of them he says it of himself. Instead of saying, 'You will have to be very careful lest, after all your lovely meetings and so on, you lose everything', he says, '*I* am going to be very careful that *I* am not a castaway'.

This is an intensely solemn chapter. We must admit that if we are not moving on this line we cannot possibly be moving in the service of God. Christ moved on this line; He lost His life but He gained it. Think of all the value that blessed life had for God! He offers us to move on the same pathway.

Ques The transfiguration follows immediately.

CAC Yes, we might expect that it would lead to an immediate vision of the glory. If we go on this line we may be eyewitnesses of the glory and that is complete compensation. It is a deathless life — "There are some of those standing here that shall not taste death until they shall have seen the kingdom of God come in power". If you go on this pathway, you live a deathless life — death can never touch it, never!

MARK 9

Mark 9

Ques Would you tell us a little as to Elias coming to restore all things?

CAC It is a feature of the kingdom of God in power that it is marked by restoration; that is peculiarly encouraging to us. "Elias indeed, having first come, restores all things". That seems to be a prominent feature in the kingdom as presented here, because Elias is put first and not Moses. In the other accounts Moses comes first. Moses would represent the inauguration of things, but Elias the restoration of things as the fruit of prophetic ministry, so the power of the kingdom is definitely marked by that. Therefore we might well look for special power in connection with restoration, and no doubt we are proving the power of the kingdom at the present time on the line of restoration.

Ques Is that why we have works at the end of this gospel, what they shall do "in my name"?

CAC Yes, all is in keeping. The power of the kingdom seems to appear in the way of purity and restoration, and also in the light of divine love. These are very blessed characteristics of the power of the kingdom, and they have a special sweetness to us at the end of the dispensation.

Rem The Lord's garments are referred to here strikingly.

CAC The power of the kingdom would be evidenced in maintaining purity of associations suitable to God. We see here a character of purity surpassing all that is earthly: no fuller on earth could produce such whiteness. That corresponds with Malachi 3. In connection with John the baptist, Malachi speaks of Jehovah as becoming "like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' lye". That suggests a purifying power; the power of the kingdom is known in saints preserving purity of associations according to God.

Rem The ministry of Elias was first a call to repentance.

CAC Yes, what the Lord connects with Elias is restoration. "He shall restore". The character is introduced in connection with the kingdom, which is most encouraging for us in a day of departure. What has been lost publicly is purity of associations, and that being lost the light of love in sonship has been lost. The movements of restoration in the power of the kingdom would be to restore these things.

This chapter presents in striking contrast the power of the two kingdoms. That is why these two incidents are put together, the scene on the mount and the

scene at the foot. We see the power of the two kingdoms: one kingdom marked by purity, restoring power, and the revelation of divine love as resting on the beloved Son; He is to be heard. That is the power of one kingdom, and then there is another kingdom: a perfect contrast where everything is utterly opposite, a most pitiable picture of the full power of Satan.

You can understand Mark putting Elias before Moses. It must have been very precious in Mark's soul to think of the power of the kingdom of God coming not only on the line of purity but on the line of restoration. It is affecting to see the character of the kingdom.

Ques How far does "restore all things" go?

CAC I suppose it goes a long way because it results in the adjustment of every outstanding question. In the kingdom of God sooner or later there must be the adjusting of every moral question. The power of the kingdom necessitates the adjustment of anything that could come in and cause divergence. So the ministry of Elias was to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers. That supposes alienation in families, and the power of the kingdom coming in to adjust the relationship. The adjustment would be necessary in view of family affection and relationship. It is impossible to think we can have the enjoyment of sonship, and divine affection, and love resting on the beloved Son, if we are not adjusted according to the purity of the kingdom. What is to mark the kingdom is everything exceeding white, as no fuller on earth could whiten. These associations are suitable to the kingdom, and if the kingdom is in power it must result in that character of things.

Rem In this incident the father had lost the affections of his child.

CAC Yes, there is the perfect contrast. The Father and Son on the mount, and everything there perfectly suitable to the freedom of divine affection; but at the foot of the mount we see a father and son where everything is in discord under the power of another kingdom. The son is dumb and deaf, and possessed by a power that is self-destructive. The power of Satan's kingdom always works on the line of destruction. The wonderful thing is that the power of the divine kingdom comes in to adjust everything, so that, where Satan is in full strength, he is completely defeated. The power of the divine kingdom seems to be seen here in the absolute displacement of the evil power that was acting.

The disputing of the scribes got its opportunity in the weakness of the disciples. What comes out is, "This kind can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting", verse 29. If the power of the kingdom of God is to be exercised

by us in reference to the power of evil, it demands conditions. The disciples had not suitable conditions, so they were impotent. I think a great deal of Mark's object here is to show how the disciples, even when the Lord was with them, were not able to exercise the power given to them. We are often like that.

It is important to see all through this gospel how the full unhindered power of the kingdom was there in the Lord. It was not only in testimony but in power, but on the disciples' side they were not in the power of it.

Ques The Lord speaks of rising from among the dead (verse 9). Is that the way the kingdom is set up?

CAC What the disciples did not understand was that there should be a resurrection *from among* the dead; they quite understood the resurrection of the dead. I think that the resurrection from among the dead has a moral counterpart: it is exactly what God is doing in the power of the kingdom now. He is bringing out a people from among the dead, so that they may be marked by purity and be able to maintain what is due to God so that God may have His pleasure in His people. The great point in reference to Elias was that God was to have His pleasure in restoring the sons of Levi; they were to be a pure oblation. That corresponds with this chapter; it finishes with a pure oblation, every sacrifice salted with salt, that is, the saints become the true sons of Levi, purified so as to become an oblation to God.

Ques What do we learn by "Bring him to me"?

CAC The power of the kingdom remains in the Lord though the disciples failed. He has to speak of them as faithless, but the power abides in Himself. He is able to deal with every situation even if it arises from the direct manifestation of the full power of Satan, so we do not need to be afraid that any situation will baffle the Lord. This is a complex situation, and yet we see the Lord's ability to deal with it. We see the extraordinary power of Satan; first in the afflicted son, then in the powerlessness of the disciples; and finally, although there is the working of faith in the father, at the same time he is conscious of the working of unbelief, for, though he can say "I believe", he has to appeal to the Lord in reference to unbelief. The secret of all weakness at all times is unbelief. What a wonderful thing it is that, if conscious we do not believe as we might, yet we can roll all our unbelief on the Lord!

Ques Why did the Lord ask how long he had been like this?

CAC I think it is a divine principle with God to go back to the origin of things, to get back to the root, and until we do there is no true moral adjustment.

The kingdom of God is in power, not in word, and the Lord would encourage us to take a proper estimate of the power of the kingdom. Now the "if thou canst" is "if thou canst believe". Have we faith to use the available power? Then the fact that God is pleased to try faith shows that it is there; it will stand the test. We see here the extreme hostility of Satan to that which is for the pleasure of God; anything that is distinctively for the pleasure of God at any moment will be the direct object of Satan's attack.

Ques Would you tell us a little about prayer and fasting?

CAC When we have to do with the direct power of evil, human resources cannot avail; therefore we are cast on God in prayer. It is always so when we have to do with the working of positive evil. I do not mean the working of the flesh, but, when it is satanic power, we are cast utterly on God, so that prayer is most important. Even Michael the archangel when disputing with the devil said, "The Lord rebuke thee". Then on the other hand there is fasting. In fasting there is the deep exercise to stand apart even from things that are perfectly lawful and legitimate. Fasting does not mean standing apart from what is wrong, but from what is legitimate at other times.

The end of this chapter is highly educational. The Lord is calling attention to what is absolutely necessary if the house of Levi is to be a pure oblation, so that God should have His pleasure in a spiritual house of Levi. If this is to be reached, if the house of Levi is to become an oblation salted with salt for the pleasure of God, these exercises must be gone through. It is instructive to see the Lord's painstaking care to instruct us in what is suitable to God, and to displace from us the unworthy thoughts that might get mixed up with faith. None of us doubts that the disciples had faith, but their very faith turned to vainglory. It is solemn that it is possible for persons to have faith and for it to turn to vainglory through personal pre-occupation. This completely hindered the disciples understanding what the Lord had before Him. The Lord had His death before Him, that He was to be killed, but they did not enter into it, they were preoccupied with thoughts that were partly the product of faith but were not suitable to that moment.

Fasting involves giving up what is legitimate. It was legitimate to want the kingdom and a good place in it; but what was legitimate was not suitable for the moment; it was out of time and tune.

Ques Would prayer and fasting lead to searching for vainglorious motives?

CAC Yes, the disciples were not altogether comfortable about it. Your heart often condemns you when your conscience does not. When the Lord challenged them, they did not like to say they were thinking who should be

the greatest. The Lord had to take them in hand and educate them in what greatness was. The Lord does not deny any of us the privilege of being great, He does not want us to be small, but He wants us to be truly great. Our natural ideas of greatness are just the opposite to the rule of the kingdom; there the one who is first is to be last and serve all. That is what we are to aspire to; that is a very lowly attitude to take up, to put yourself in a place inferior to everyone else. The Lord became servant of all. The Lord took a little child and set it in their midst and took it in His arms — that is greatness, to be a little child in the arms of Jesus! Which would you rather be — an apostle, or a little child in the arms of Jesus? A child has no status in this world, a child is not reckoned much in this world, but what is it to be the object of the love of Jesus, to be in His embrace! One who moves about among his brethren in the arms of Jesus brings that with him, and every one who receives him receives the One who sent him; he brings that atmosphere with him. The great power of Satan's kingdom is put forth to incapacitate God's creature for appreciating movements in relation to divine affections, but when we get that power broken we find a child in the arms of Jesus. Now, the Lord says, 'That is the sort of person that can be received, and where he is received I am received, and where I am received, the One who sent Me is received'.

Ques The Lord rebukes the unclean spirit; He does not touch him — is there any significance in that?

CAC Yes, it is the action of divine authority. There is nothing sympathetic in the way the Lord deals with wicked spirits; He deals with them in pure authority. If it is a leper, a blind man, or a sick woman, He touches them; there is something sympathetic; but there is no sympathy with the Lord's dealing with what is satanic. It would not be right that there should be. He speaks with authority. After the spirit is displaced we see the sympathetic touch; the Lord takes the boy by the hand. It is very instructive to see that.

Then we see that the spirit of the disciples needed to be adjusted in another way. There seemed to be a kind of jealousy for the Lord that, when they saw one casting out demons in His name, they forbade him; it was because he followed not *us*. That was another spiritual discord that had to be brought into harmony. We get away sometimes from the capital 'I' and turn it into a big 'us' — he follows not *us*. They ought rather to have been glad that there was another man able to use the power of the kingdom in the way they themselves had failed. They had failed in it immediately before and yet were ready to call this man to account because he could do it. The Lord had to tell them that one who could do a miracle in His name could not soon speak evil of Him, and "he who is not against us is for us".

Ques How would that apply to us?

CAC That we do not want to stop anyone from doing the work of the Lord, but rather to pray for the success and prosperity of all those who do it.

Rem Paul could rejoice that Christ was preached even out of contention.

CAC Yes, and it is important that we should keep in that spirit. Everything done in the work of the Lord is our gain. If people are converted anywhere it is a gain to us, and anything that comforts or edifies the saints is a gain to us. Anything that is done in the power of the kingdom is a gain to us; but you must not excuse the man.

Ques Would that have been a pure oblation going up to God?

CAC We must learn both sides of the lesson. I do not think there was a pure oblation in the man casting out demons nor in the disciples forbidding him. But how much that man lost! He lost immensely, and nothing could make up for it; he missed a unique privilege. He had the chance then of a privilege that all eternity will never give him again, for he had the chance of following the Son of man in His blessed service of the kingdom here. He exercised the power of the kingdom in His name but without being identified with that company which was peculiarly for the pleasure of God. We must take both sides of the lesson: we do not want to forbid anyone doing the Lord's work, whoever or wherever they are — we thank God and pray for them; but we never lose sight of the fact that many of them are missing a priceless privilege. Jonathan missed a privilege, and the end found him in companionship with what God had rejected.

It was individual self-importance that made the disciples want to be first, and dispute who should be the greatest. It was collective self-importance that made them forbid the man because he follows not with *us*. The restoring power of the kingdom would eliminate both these elements, and there cannot otherwise be a pure oblation. The restoring power of the kingdom would also have brought that brother into line. He was not in line when casting out demons in the Lord's name and not walking with the Lord — exercising His power now and despising His company.

Self-importance often comes in and gets mixed up with faith. The disciples made a wrong use of their faith, and it led them to look for the kingdom and a place there. The Lord is here as a refiner of silver and a fuller's lye to purify all the garments of His people. He exercises His power so that the sons of Levi should become a pure oblation, He conducts them along until they become it; at the end of this chapter we see that the oblation is there and the salt upon it. The kingdom of God is not that you can do wonderful things, but that you

can maintain purity and can be preserved in restoration and enjoy sonship. In the dignity of sonship you can afford to be small, to be a little child and the subject of the love of Christ; you can get rid of the big 'I' and 'us' and are on the line of the pure oblation.

That line raises many serious exercises — first as to the sort of influence you bring to bear on other people. Then you are exercised about your own hand and foot and eye.

Every ferocious and self-assertive thing is to be brought under the controlling power of a little child. The lion and the bear are ferocious animals, and they are to be brought under the control of a little child in the power of the kingdom.

I think verse 41 of this chapter serves to bring out how we regard what is of Christ in one another, and in ourselves, too. That is the exercise suggested by this portion of the gospel. It suggests that the one who gives a cup of cold water has seen something in the disciples that is "of Christ", and the privilege is taken up from that point of view of refreshing the one it is given to. The one who gives the cup has seen something in the disciple that is of Christ; it is what comes out in the disciple that tests him. This is a vital consideration and a key to the understanding of this part of the gospel — a solemn and searching part. It is very important and blessed because we get in this part the key to liberty.

The disciples were like ourselves, they needed to be instructed in that which had value in relation to God's kingdom. We all need exactly the same instruction. The disciples had been reasoning among themselves as to which of them was the greatest — that was not being of Christ. If a man saw you disputing which should be the greatest, and gave you a cup of cold water, he would not be giving it to you because you were of Christ. The point is that the person gives the cup of cold water because he has seen something "of Christ" in the disciple, so he lays himself out in a very humble way to refresh it; he gives a cup of cold water to minister to that "because ye are of Christ". We talk sometimes very happily and profitably of what it is to be "in Christ"; but it is well for us to remember that nothing is "in Christ" but what is "of Christ". It raises the question as to what kind of persons we are.

Ques The Corinthians were spoken of as "in Christ" though they were in rather a sad state, were they not?

CAC Yes. They were in Christ from the standpoint of divine purpose and calling, but they were a long way from being in Christ as having come under the grace of the anointing. "In Christ" means that one has come under the

grace of the anointing; it is a simple statement and cannot be controverted. How could you have anything in Christ that was not of Him? In one sense saints are in Christ before the foundation of the world, but we are speaking of it rather in connection with how it is worked out by the work of God.

Ques Does not a believer learn what it is to be in Christ before he is found to be of Him?

CAC Yes, in the gospel sense one may see that all the blessings are in Christ: all the blessings of the gospel are presented as being in Christ, in another Man, and by faith in that Man we come into them. But when it is a question of saints reaching what it is to be in Christ in their own consciousness, there must be a deriving from Christ. In Romans chapter 5 comes before chapter 6: in chapter 5 all the blessed things are presented as coming from God *through* our Lord Jesus Christ, and, as we come into the good of these things, we learn what it is to be *of Christ*, we are of that Man. The disciples here are looked upon as having taken character from Christ, they are of Christ, and that is appreciated by the one who gives the cup of cold water; he wants to refresh that which is of Christ.

There are two things in contrast here: we are either refreshing and helping on what is of Christ in another, or there is the danger of becoming a snare to one another. Are we encouraging what is of Christ, or becoming a snare? It might be that the influence that goes out from us tends to bring souls into such captivity that they cannot move on the line of being of Christ, or the line of life or of the kingdom. If a bird is caught in a snare, its liberty is lost: the Lord is warning us here of things that rob us of spiritual liberty. We want to move on the line of liberty, or the line of being *of Christ*.

Ques Were the Corinthians snared in that way?

CAC Yes, I think they were. The apostle was largely working to liberate them from the snare. They had been diverted from what was of Christ, and were giving place to a good deal that was not of Christ: that all comes in on the line of a snare.

"Of Christ" is a term that Scripture often uses: "They that are of the Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts", Galatians 5: 24. They are of the Christ and therefore, being so, they cannot tolerate those things of the flesh. Again Paul says to the Galatians: "If ye are of Christ, then ye are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise", chapter 3: 29. That is deriving from Him.

Ques Would you say that was taking character from Him?

CAC Yes, if we derive from Him we are suited to come under the anointing and to form part of that wonderful system and order of things that is for the pleasure of God in Christ.

Rem I had regarded "in Christ" as the abiding work of God accepted by faith — "of him are ye in Christ Jesus", 1 Corinthians 1: 30.

CAC That is by the work of God. If you look at saints abstractly as subjects of the work of God, they are by God's work in Christ. Several things go together in connection with "in Christ". Redemption is needed, the Spirit is needed, but then the work of God in the soul is needed. "Of him (God) are ye in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption; that according as it is written, He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord". Paul makes his boast in God, who has made him to know Christ as wisdom from God, righteousness, holiness and redemption. What a full equipment! The saints are viewed there abstractly in Christ by the work of God; but it is another thing to reach it, and stand in the good of it. To be in Christ as God's wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption is a marvellous thing, and takes in the whole scope of things. There is the wisdom of God in Christ, righteousness in a risen Christ, holiness connected with Him as ascended, and redemption, His coming again. It takes in the whole scope of what is in Christ.

It is a great thing to recognise what is of Christ, and refresh it, encourage it, and try to help it — give a cup of cold water. We see something of Christ in all saints — then encourage it, give the cup of cold water, and do not become a snare.

Ques Is anything suggested by *having* a cup of cold water?

CAC It suggests ability to minister refreshment; all have that. A very little matter can encourage what is of Christ in a soul, as a very little matter may become a snare. We can all give a cup of cold water — if we see a bit of Christ we can do something to encourage it. The exercise is to be on the line of refreshing and encouraging, and of keeping clear of anything that might become a snare, anything that would hold the soul captive so that it does not pursue the line of being of Christ. That is the thought here of a snare.

We see this wonderful 'life divine below' of which we have been singing. What marks the kingdom in power is the exceeding whiteness of the garments so that no fuller on earth could white them. We see, in a 'little one', a young believer, beautiful features, beautiful affections and simplicity. We often see this in a young one, his soul realising the great gain he has acquired as being in Christ, and perhaps he meets with an old saint. Has that saint got his cup of

cold water for him, or has he become feeble in his own spiritual apprehensions so that he becomes a snare instead of a refreshment? The one who gives the cup of cold water shows that he appreciates what he has seen of Christ in another, he shows his appreciation in a simple and insignificant way, and he would be the last man to be a snare.

Ques The cup is given "in my name". What would that suggest?

CAC It suggests that the one who has the cup is animated by a great regard for that name. If so, how delighted he would be to refresh what is of Christ and help it on, and to be exercised and careful lest he become a snare! We are always being tested as to whether we appreciate Christ, and as to what influence we bring to bear.

Ques Paul speaks of Onesiphorus and Stephanas having refreshed him. Would that be the principle of the cup of cold water?

CAC Yes, that is the principle of it. We are set to encourage and promote what is of Christ, and not to bring into activity what is of the flesh. If anything I do has the effect of bringing a soul into captivity, that is the thought of a snare. A snare here refers to a trap which catches a bird. If anything has the effect of bringing into bondage, we shall not be free to pursue the line of what is of Christ. It is a terrible thing to become a snare — the Lord speaks of a millstone and being cast into the depth of the sea. I heard of a person long breaking bread lending a novel to a young believer. Was that the cup of cold water? If anything in my ways tends to bring a soul into captivity so that he does not ardently pursue what is of Christ, I become a snare to that person. The Lord would have us exercised as to our influence, and as to how our ways affect others, or whether they make much of Christ. If we are moving with the Lord we shall be on the line of the cup of cold water, and not on the line of the snare; one leads to refreshment and liberty and the other to captivity. The next thing is that we are to be greatly exercised as to what becomes a snare to ourselves; it is only as keeping free oneself that one can move on the line of keeping others from snares.

Ques When does the reward come?

CAC You get your reward if you are refreshing a soul;

you have such a big reward at the present time that you can leave the other safely.

Then we find the Lord speaking of the most important members: that is things that are most important to a man in regard to life in this world — the hand, the foot and the eye. The Lord speaks of their becoming a snare. We have to

find out what our own snares are. I do not expect others to tell me what is a snare to me, and I do not think anyone knows. If I am moving on spiritual lines I shall know. These verses suppose that you become conscious of something in your actions — your hand; or your foot — your walk, which brings in your associations; or your eye — the way you are using your intelligence. There is something in them which holds you in captivity; you are not free to pursue what is of Christ, and you must deal with it most decisively. I heard of a man who was told by his brethren that he was subject to a certain failing. He was very surprised and went home and asked his wife whether it was true. She said, 'Yes, I think it is'. If that man had been walking with God, instead of his failing being pointed out to him by his brethren and his wife, he would have been the first to find it out. If we are spiritual we shall be the first to discern those workings that impede and hold us in captivity in regard to what is of Christ, and then the thing will be dealt with decisively. A man's hand, foot or eye are his most important members which give him a place in this world; but the Lord says, 'It is a place in relation to life and the kingdom that you are after, and you are to be prepared to be maimed in regard to life here in this world so that you may pursue the line of life and the kingdom'. It is an exercise we all have to face, because with every one of us there is the danger of something in our activities, our walk and associations, or something in the way we use our intelligence, that may hold us captive. We can feel it; it is not a question of others seeing it — now what shall we do? Just do what the fox does when caught in a trap; he eats his leg off to get free, because he values his liberty more than his leg. Now that is the point. Do you value your liberty in pursuit of what is of Christ? If you do, you make a sacrifice in regard to that which gives you a place in this world because you want to be free in relation to that region of life and the kingdom of God. If you find something holds you captive, eat your leg off like the fox.

Ques Is it like Paul in Philippians 3?

CAC We see the principle of it there. Paul's great motive was "on account of Christ"; he says it three times over. Christ had become the dominating influence. Anything that holds one captive from the line of pursuing Christ is a snare. Satan says, 'Surely you will not be so strict, but have a little liberty'. But the saint says, 'That is what I want, and so I will not be brought into bondage, and I will cut off all these things'.

It is solemn that the Lord puts the case in such an extreme light; and we can notice it is the way of Scripture to do that. Take John's epistles — what an extreme light he puts things in! "He that committeth sin is of the devil". "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in

him". John puts it in an extreme light to exercise us. Now the Lord raises this question, 'Is it not better for you to be maimed than to go to hell-fire?' If a man actually fell under the power of a snare in such a way that he could not move at all on the line of life or the kingdom of God, that man would go to hell. It could not be absolutely true of one born of God, but the Lord puts the thing in an extreme light. The Lord shows the way the road leads; a certain road leads to hell. The believer may never get there, but would he like to walk a single yard on that road? The christian may say, 'I shall never come there'; but the Lord is not here speaking of sovereign counsels or grace, but of the principles of the kingdom. The Lord speaks wisely when He points out the fact that, if you are led captive in view of life and the kingdom of God, the end of such a course is hell-fire. If we do not move on the line of life and the kingdom, what else is there? There is a course of what is of Christ, the narrow way; outside of it there is only the broad way which leads to hell-fire. The Lord puts it in a solemn way, and we must not think that the Lord does not speak what is right and good for us to hear.

Ques Has the Lord in His mind the kingdom come in power?

CAC Yes, and that preserves us from snares. The Lord is showing us what a terrible thing a snare is, so as to preserve us from being captive in it. The Lord is leading on to the fact that the saints, instead of being snared, are to become a true sacrifice for the pleasure of God. The line of sacrifice is for the pleasure of God, and the line of snares is self-indulgence. There is some kind of self-indulgence connected with every kind of snare — hand, foot or eye; but the Lord would put us on the line of sacrifice, showing us at the finish of the chapter the saints as subjects of the kingdom, as the true oblation. The salt is there, every sacrifice salted with salt. Every true believer who is the subject of divine calling has been called to the place of sacrifice, to be for the pleasure of God. To have salt in ourselves is our own exercise to preserve us. We are not to be told to do this or that; we are not dependent on rules, or regulations, or people telling us what to do, or conforming to the manner of life accredited by brethren; but we are to have salt in ourselves. Everyone is to be salted with fire, it is universal; every one is to be salted with fire, and every sacrifice salted with salt. God will search out everything in judgment. With the unconverted at the great white throne it is eternal; the believer, one born anew, is searched out by the judgment of the Lord; we are chastened so that we may not be condemned with the world. The believer is salted with fire now: The Lord will try every work whether it be good or evil. Do you think the Lord will shut His eyes to what is evil in those He has purchased with His precious blood? No, if we indulge the flesh the Lord will judge it, as He did at

Corinth so that they should not be condemned with the world. We get purgatory now, a dealing of the Lord that is purifying *now*, not after death.

Ques What does the salt losing its savour mean?

CAC The natural tendency is for the savour of what is of God to be lost. The Lord is referring to Leviticus a when He says, "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt"; He puts the saints into the place of the oblation or meat-offering.

Ques How do our exercises preserve us?

CAC It seems to me that the salt is the sense of having to do with God as known in grace — it is the salt of the covenant. The sense of having to do with God known in grace produces normally an intense desire to be faithful in our relations with Him, and preserves freedom from every snare, so there is nothing to spoil the character of the oblation. Nothing is a true sacrifice that is not of Christ: everything outside Christ will be burned up in the fire of judgment. What is of Christ goes up in a sweet savour to God. Salt is that faithful purpose produced by divine grace to be true to the covenant relations in which we stand to God. Truth to this covenant relation means the absolute refusal of the flesh, and the world, and of everything of the character of a snare. It means the cultivation and expression of those blessed features of Christ. The salt indicates inward exercises; it is our side. There can be no failure on God's side of the covenant, but on ours the salt may be lacking. God had said, "neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking", and "with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt". It is the faithful purpose to be true to covenant relations and to maintain what is on the line of what is of Christ. Is it of Christ? That is the test. Nothing has sacrificial value but what is of Christ. Those who have salt are fully set up to pursue what is of Christ, and of that order of man; but the devil is always trying to bring us into captivity so that we should be hindered from pursuing that line.

If every one of us here were to be thrown back on our own spiritual intuition we would be preserved, but Satan brings in something not on that line to bring us into captivity, so that we cannot pursue the line of spiritual intuition. Christ is the standard to be maintained: it is not excusing things because others do them. "Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another". That is the only way we can walk together in peace, by each refusing the flesh in himself. As we do that we walk in peace because there is nothing to produce discord, and all are pursuing the line of what is of Christ.

Ques Is it like Romans 12, presenting our body a living sacrifice?

CAC That works out in service to the brethren, so that every one has his measure of faith, and every one takes up his bit of service according to his

measure of faith. Everything works in perfect peace and harmony among the brethren when they move on the line of Romans 12; but it is a tremendous exercise to "present your bodies a living sacrifice".

Ques Would a scripture like this lead us to be exercised about ourselves and not to judge others?

CAC Yes, Mr. Darby once said, 'When we think we are judging others, the Lord is judging and exposing our own state'.

I think we see the kingdom in power in all this; that is Mark's presentation of it. Matthew presents the kingdom in prospect, "the Son of man coming in his kingdom". Matthew brings what is future in its operative and illuminative power into the present; so the saint is marked by that which is as yet future outwardly. Luke shows us the kingdom patterned in Jesus, and Mark the kingdom in power, so that what is true in Him should become true in us.

Ques Is the truth of the kingdom shown in righteousness and peace?

CAC Everything must work in the kingdom on the line of righteousness: the first law of the kingdom is righteousness, and that as far as we are concerned is a matter of self-judgment. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life; grace brings you to judge yourself and, when you do, you move in the direction of eternal life. The point here is that there should be ability to enter into life and the kingdom of God. Everyone knows just exactly how far he or she has entered into life and the kingdom of God. There is no uncertainty as to the measure. We know how far we have entered; it is not very much with some of us.

The kingdom of God is not in word but in power; the character of it is righteousness, peace — no discord, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Rem "Thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be richly furnished unto you", 2 Peter 1: 11.

CAC Yes, Peter shows us the way in, how we can be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in pursuing a certain line, it is quite in keeping with this chapter.

MARK 10

Mark 10

CAC The Lord comes here to the other side of Jordan, and takes up these questions connected with natural relationships. He brings out in that connection very great and important principles which are of the greatest importance for us as seeking to pursue the line of being *of Christ*. We were noticing last week that the disciples were of Christ; and that anything which diverts us from pursuing that line, anything which holds us captive so that we fail to pursue the line that is of Christ, is a snare. The Lord insists that it is better that we should make any sacrifice rather than that we should be held captive so that we do not pursue the line of Christ.

Now I think we get an important indication here that if we come under the influence of Christ He will maintain in force that which God has originally instituted. It is a great and far-reaching principle that Christ will maintain in all integrity every institution of God. It is a great thing to be brought back to what is divinely instituted, and that is what is brought to pass if we come under the influence and teaching of Christ; we are brought back to the true character of things as divinely instituted, and we are led to see there can be no departure according to God from the original institution. In connection with the question of marriage, no divorce is mentioned in Mark's gospel. Divorce forms no part of the original thought of God.

Ques Is the thought fully maintained in Christ and the church?

CAC Yes, that is the suggestion. The bond between Christ and the church is indissoluble, and it is connected with the original, divine institution of things; God had that in mind from the beginning. If you think of Christ and the assembly, there is no thought of divorce. Governmentally Israel has got into the place of distance, but Jehovah has never departed from the bond; He remains faithful to it. "The gifts and the calling of God are not subject to repentance". The marital bond between Jehovah and Israel will be established entirely on the ground of Jehovah's everlasting faithfulness. While Jehovah has governmentally set Israel aside, yet He has never removed her from her place in His affections; He has remained faithful. It is beautiful to see that the provision made under law by Moses was for man's hard-heartedness. Now there was never any hard-heartedness with Jehovah towards Israel, and there never could be in regard of Christ towards the assembly. It is an indissoluble bond. The great security and blessedness which we enjoy is in coming back to the original institution which it is impossible to change.

In Matthew divorce is permitted on the ground of infidelity to the relationship: that is the governmental side, but in Mark it is not said to be permissible. Christ would set us in the light of original institutions; all the relations between Christ and the church abide. Whatever the departure on man's side there is none on God's side — the thought of divorce is abhorrent to the heart of God and Christ. The principle of that should be ever retained in our hearts, even if we have on the line of government to exercise what is disciplinary. We are never to put a brother out of our affections though we may have to put him out of our company. The original bond remains and is never violated in the affections.

One can see the enemy's attack on God in the general thoughts of marriage abroad today, the general tendency to loose the bond and make divorce easy. This is directly against the divine institution, and we all need to be safeguarded by coming under the influence of Christ. If you give up the divine institution you open the door to the incoming of every kind of evil.

Ques Why, after the Lord speaking of what is "of Christ", is the first question on the natural side?

CAC I think because divine adjustment is called for in regard of natural relationships under the influence of Christ; the influence of Christ touches and adjusts everything divinely. The house is the place of intimacy where the influence and instruction of Christ are known privately amongst His own. The whole point is that purity of affection is required so that every sacrifice should be salted with salt.

Ques Is Christ brought prominently before us in this question, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother"?

CAC Yes, we see in that that the assembly takes the place of precedence, so Christ has left Israel and kept to the assembly for the present, cleaving to His wife. Christ is absolutely entitled to the pure affections of the assembly.

Ques If we are of the Christ is it not important that we should cherish the teaching of the Head and take character from Him?

CAC Yes, that is exactly how the influence of Christ would express itself; it would bring about in us a very jealous and holy cherishing of the original thoughts of God which are connected with Christ and the assembly; so that the assembly should not be alienated from Christ but should be fully responsive to Him in those affections proper to the indissoluble bond.

Rem At Ephesus there was secret decline before the outward manifestation.

CAC Yes, the failure was in wifely affections. God is faithful to the bond as far as Israel is concerned, and Christ is faithful to the assembly, so our exercise is that we should not be unfaithful.

It is a great encouragement to return to the original character of things; that is the whole point in incorruptible affections. There is an incorruptible bond on His side and the Lord looks for the uncorrupted bond on our side, so that at the end of Ephesians it speaks of "them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption". The church epistle leads to that end; we have a company on earth preserving fidelity to the incorruptible affections proper to that indissoluble bond — it is beautiful to see Ephesians finishing on that note. While natural relationships are set in their original light here, great and far-reaching principles are unfolded in them.

Divorce is not permissible in Mark's presentation. Mark has in view restoration. We have been noticing what a definite place restoration has in Mark's gospel. Being a restored man himself, he is a suitable vessel for prophetic ministry to effect restoration. We see the unchanging character of things on the divine side, so if there is any movement on our side we are quite sure it will meet with full response on the divine side. It is very important to view restoration, and very encouraging for us. We have no hardness on God's side.

Ques Why do the children come in here?

CAC The Lord would greatly exalt the thought of what comes out in a little child; it is that kind of material that suits the kingdom of God. A little child has not yet been corrupted by the ambitions and lusts of the world, and it has receptiveness and confidence. A little child according to the divine thought is not an object to be looked down upon, but looked up to as a model. It shows the moral conditions suitable to the kingdom and the blessing of Christ.

Ques Has this service in view?

CAC It speaks in a previous chapter of receiving one such little child when it is a question of being sent forth by the Lord in service — received as a person of importance to the affections of Christ and not of importance to this world.

Ques He lays His hands on them. Is that identifying Himself with them?

CAC The little child spirit is that which the Lord loves to commit Himself to, and on which He can put His abundant blessing. What marks a child is that the ambitions and objects and lusts of the world have not asserted themselves there.

Ques It is the only way of entering the kingdom?

CAC Yes, and it is a question of receiving, "Verily, I say to you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter into it". The question of receiving precedes that of entering. The principle of my size in the kingdom is determined by what I have received. What I have received of God and of Christ is my measure in the kingdom. A little child cannot give or do, it can only receive. I think the little child's spirit is always naturally despised, and we are in danger of despising it. As born into this world we have no importance; our only importance lies in the wonderful blessedness in which God has made Himself known to us in Christ, so that all we have we derive from Him. It is a question of receiving; there is ability to enter into the kingdom of God; we come into it intelligently.

Ques In what way are we liable to despise little children?

CAC I think we see the spirit coming out in the disciples, a consciousness of greatness in themselves. Under the influence of Christ we get adjusted in our perceptions as to what is great.

These are two very great principles: the unchangeable inviolability of what has been divinely instituted, and then this beautiful spirit of which a little child is a model. The little child of today gets corrupted very early; it is one of the sad features of the present day that the little child character disappears so early. The Lord was the receiver; it was all seen in Him. He was always receiving from the Father, His ear was opened morning by morning. He came down here to receive everything and He never departed from that. The little child spirit is to be maintained along with the affections that belong to the relationship.

Ques What did you refer to in speaking of the other side of Jordan?

CAC I was thinking that natural affections belonged to the wilderness side of Jordan. What marks the Lord here is the recognition of what was originally of God. We see it in the young man, too (verse 17). There was a great deal beautiful about him, but the Lord searches out a subtle hindrance. The young man was evidently able to appreciate the goodness he perceived in Christ; he had desires to inherit eternal life; he had kept the commandments which the Lord quoted to him, so he drew out the Lord's love; but there was a chain holding him of which he was quite unconscious until the Lord pointed it out to him. Possessions here have a greater influence on us than we have any idea of. The Lord exposes here the subtlety of the snare, and shows what a powerful chain holds the soul from making spiritual progress. Riches give one a certain importance in this world.

Ques What is the thought in the Lord loving him?

CAC I think there is a lesson for us to rightly take account of what is according to God even in a natural man. At the same time the Lord faithfully exposes the chain that was holding the young man. We see here that the natural man can go a long way in the appreciation of goodness, and can apparently be upright and full of integrity as far as his own conscience was concerned. That which is good in itself is in the natural estimation proof of the favour of God. People often refer to natural advantages as a proof of the favour of God — that is a real snare. I think there was that about the young man that was very attractive as far as it went, but the real state of his heart had to be exposed. We do see people sometimes so amiable and marked by so much grace and kindness that one cannot help admiring them, but when the Lord touches the real state of heart — He alone can do it — it brings out what is there. This man was tested by possessions; he preferred them to the infinite goodness disclosed in Christ. It comes to light that naturally a man does not estimate treasure in heaven as having greater value than possessions on earth; it is *impossible* for him to estimate treasures in heaven more than what is on earth.

Ques In what way does the Lord touch it today?

CAC In exposing to us the many influences that act on us that are not His own influences. The question is, What place has Christ in our hearts? The Lord invited the young man to follow Him, as He invites us. The Lord says, You disencumber yourself of your own possessions and follow Me — but he went away sad. We all profess, and no doubt sincerely, that we appreciate the goodness seen in Christ, but the question is, Is He paramount? If the supreme goodness of God in a blessed Man has come before us, it is entitled to command us absolutely; and if it does not it is because the influence of the world is holding us back. Christ was not to this man the infinite treasury of what is divinely good, and he did not recognise that God Himself was the source of the good. The blessed Lord maintained that God Himself was the source of the good, He was Himself the treasury of all the good that God was the source of. If that comes in power before the heart, He is entitled to command allegiance, and He takes precedence of everything else. This man found his possessions more to him than infinite goodness. He had come forward to assert his belief that Christ was the good Teacher, but when he was tested he attached more to his possessions than to infinite goodness. That is the spot the Lord touches. When we have to do with the Lord He always touches us at the spot that tests us, and if we are humbled under His touch we turn to God and get the blessing of the touch. Riches are not harmful in themselves, but tremendously so in their effects on the souls of men. It is no

matter whether they are small or large; I may be as much hindered by small possessions as another by large.

The Lord would instruct us in what the almighty power of God can do; it can make Christ, as the treasury of divine good, more attractive and precious to us than anything in the seen condition of things. The Lord gives us every inducement to move after Him. When Peter says, We have left all, the Lord says, What you have left is the hundredth part of what you have got. The Lord proposes that you get the compensation of what you left a hundred times more in the company of the brethren. The Lord has not deceived us when He says, You will receive a hundredfold more in this present time. It is not when you get to heaven, but in this present time. The great trouble is, we have left so little. What a wonderful opening out there is here of the wealthy compensation which we find in the company of the saints for what we have given up; there is a new kind of possession and a new system of affections which are infallibly secured to us by the Lord's word. Every one of us should look to find this among the brethren. If I find that the brethren are not compensation to me it raises the question of whether I have been on the line of leaving things for Christ. Your compensation among the brethren is commensurate with what you have left.

Ques Would the young man be "the last" (verse 31)?

CAC I think the Lord drops that word in at the end to remind us that we have not reached final adjustment. There may be those prominent at the present time, and when the adjustment of the kingdom comes out it may be that the prominent one may find himself at the rear. The Lord says, Do not form your estimate of things by the present position, but remember that the kingdom involves adjustment. Certain men are prominent, teaching and preaching, but when the adjustment is made, the one who is prominent now may be far back. It does not follow that they will be prominent when the kingdom is adjusted. Saints in obscurity may be more marked by the spirit of suffering and service than those who positionally are more prominent.

The personal pathway of the Lord must always be of the deepest interest to those that love Him, and that part which comes before us in verses 32 - 45 is very touching. The Lord was going to Jerusalem for the last time, His service in Israel closing up. He was as it were preparing Himself and His disciples for suffering; so we come here to that which very closely touches and affects us. We have seen something of the wonderful character of the Lord's service, the perfection and grace of it, and now it comes out that the service is in no way appreciated by men, and it only results in suffering. It was perhaps the greatest element of sorrow to the Lord that His service was refused by His

people: they say of Him, "What are those wounds in thy hands?" and He says, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends". That shows how keenly the Lord felt the rejection of His service. That is the import of the wounds in His hands — those hands of unwearying service were wounded.

The Lord recognised at certain points in His pathway that service is to be replaced by suffering. He is the blessed instructed One of Isaiah 50: He says, "The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of the instructed", so He has learned to succour by a word him that is weary. That has been the character of His service. But there came a time when He was instructed in view of suffering, so He says, "I was not rebellious; I turned not away back. I gave my back to smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair". The moment comes when it is manifest that the service of God involves suffering and rejection here, and no lesson could be more deeply important for us.

Rem It seems connected with the title Son of man.

CAC Yes, it is very touching. It is not the Christ but the Son of man, the One who has taken a place on man's side so as to be claimed by man; that is involved in His title Son of man. He puts Himself in relation with man to be claimed by man, and He was the One whom Jehovah visited because of His delight in Him. It is wonderful that He could say in the words of the prophet, "Man acquired me as bondman from my youth", Zechariah 13: 5. It is the One whom man has acquired who is delivered into the hands of men for their judgment, and that is the character of the present time. A divine Person has come in on the line of service to man — "Man acquired me" That is the Son of man, and they cannot get away from the responsibility of having acquired Him. Now the question is, What do they think of Him, what estimate have they formed of Him?

The Lord goes on before, He sets His face like a flint. He knows what the path involves, and He leads that way up to Jerusalem, and we have to learn to follow Him in that path. He was sustained by divine affection and by the consciousness of being approved of God by resurrection — "after three days he will rise again". In relation to service we have to move on these lines. In seeking to follow this blessed One we have to prepare ourselves for suffering and the judgment of men. Just as that blessed One was delivered to the judgment of men, so the saints at this present time are placed under the judgment of men; and we do not expect that judgment to be anything but adverse, and never favourable to what is of God. But the Lord was content to set His face like a flint, to move stedfastly on, knowing He would be vindicated. He was not ashamed, but justified and approved of God in resurrection.

Ques Does the Lord educate us to be superior, too?

CAC None of us would be naturally superior to the judgment of men. Often with us, in seeking to move in service, there is an expectation of being approved of men, perhaps even of being approved of brethren; it is the same principle.

This character of things covers all the period and that is why the gentiles are brought in as well as the Jews. There is a period during which the Son of man should be subjected to the judgment of those who have acquired Him. Men have acquired Him in the favour of God, they acquire Him to be a subject of judgment — what do they think of the Son of man? That test is going on still. What do they think of the service in which He has placed Himself so near to men? Will they still wound His hands? The principle is spread out over the whole period; it is still the period of His being delivered into the hands of men for their judgment, and their judging Him is a very solemn thing. He is still in the hands of men and still the subject of man's judgment: men are left to form their opinions and come to their conclusions about the Son of man. Man lies under the responsibility of having acquired that wonderful Servant. What does he think of Him?

Ques It has been said that the Son of man is a name which a divine Person has assumed in order that He might come near to man?

CAC Yes, and what is God's answer to man's judgment? That character, that condition of man that has been placed before man's judgment and has been refused and rejected, His blessed hands of service wounded — that Man is to be supreme in the universe of God.

Ques Why were the disciples amazed and afraid? The Lord had said nothing to them.

CAC I think they had an intuitive sense of the character of the path in which the Lord was leading; they did not understand it intelligently, but they understood it intuitively. He was going to Jerusalem and they must have had a sense that all that was expressed in Him would not meet with the approval of men.

Ques Would you say that His suffering involved theirs?

CAC I think they ought to have perceived it. We all ought to perceive that His suffering involves ours. If we follow Him in that path of service it results in the same character of service for us. They were in the way going up to Jerusalem; we are in that way, there is no other way for those who are followers of Christ.

Rem When He chose His disciples, it is said, "that they might be with him".

CAC Yes, it is only as under His personal influence that we have an impression of Him to carry forth. We cannot give an expression of Christ if we have not received an impression of Him. If you and I are to give an expression of Christ, we must get an impression from Him.

Rem We would like to do that, but when it is in connection with His sorrows it is an exercise, and we often do not like it.

CAC Yes, it is a real exercise. The Lord brings it before those who wanted a great place: James and John come in as desiring a place with Him in glory. There was self-importance mixed with it. They were out of touch and out of tune — the Lord was thinking of His sufferings. These instances serve to show that the presence of the Spirit is necessary to put the saints into tune; without the Spirit none of us would be in tune. Christians miss a great deal by being out of tune often; they have something before them of God, but not the particular thing that the Lord would bring before them at the moment.

We may be in the right path and have the Lord before us but not be in tune.

Ques What would encourage us to take up His pathway?

CAC Coming where the disciples came under the personal influence of Christ; there is no royal road to it but that.

The Lord brings them back to the line. He says, "Ye do not know what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup which I drink, or be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?" The cup here would be the deep inward sorrow of wounded love.

Ques Did not Paul follow closely in these steps?

CAC Yes, we see the deep sorrow of Paul's heart in the refusal of the service of his love. "All in Asia" had turned away from him. His hands too were wounded in the house of his friends.

The Lord here is setting them free from human thoughts in connection with the glory, and seeking to identify them with His own thoughts. There is a path in which God's will can be done, and in which God can be served. We must be prepared to step out in a path that will not be approved by natural men or by carnal believers, to step out on that line and have no place of glory. I believe in connection with service there is sometimes a thought for self. These beloved disciples were thinking of the glory of Christ; it was a subtle kind of self-importance, but the Lord indicated to them the true character of service. The question for us all is, What can I do to serve the brethren? What am I prepared to suffer in that line of service? If you want to have a place on His right hand and on His left you can have it in the greatest nearness to Him in

that lowly place of suffering service. The Lord says to them, 'You can be as near to Me as you like in the way of suffering, but as to nearness in glory that is not in My hands'. He refers that to the Father, but He says, 'You can be as near to me as you like in suffering'. Then the Lord introduces the principle of sovereignty: everything brought out in glory will be the fruit of sovereignty according to the Father's purpose. This wonderful place at the Lord's right hand and left is prepared for certain persons known to the Father. That lies in the region of sovereignty, but the Lord says, 'You can have the place at my right hand and left in service and suffering'. God is the Father of glory; the system of glory has its origin in God, the Father of glory. He will place the saints in glory according to His own purpose, and the Lord says, 'Do not be exercised about that; I want you to be as near to Me as possible in this path that I am treading'.

In James we see the rejection of his service at the hands of those outside. John was left here to be one hundred years old and to see his service rejected inside. Diotrephes loved to have the first place — he was a man on the line of glory, but it was self-glory in the christian circle; and in that circle John's hands were wounded. He wrote a letter and they would not receive it. One feels the need of being prepared to suffer; how little we are prepared for it! If we get a rebuff or a slight, how soon we get our backs up instead of being prepared to suffer! Is there a readiness to break loose from everything which would detain us? It is a question of being in the way here; if that is the way we should not want to be hindered. We all have something to hinder us like the blind man; he was a poor beggar in contrast to the rich young man, but he had a garment that hindered. The poorest had some hindrance — throw it away. This blind man threw his garment away.

We find the same spirit in all the twelve: two were wanting a place, and the ten were indignant because they did, so the Lord has to reveal all their thoughts. The ten were on the line of exercising lordship and authority, but that is the opposite of service. To exercise lordship and authority is what we naturally like, but Paul says, 'We have no dominion over your faith but would like to be helpers of your joy'. If an apostle could say that, it becomes you and me. I am sure the Lord would lead us along this way of affection, and it would fortify us against a great many things that severely test us.

How the Lord delights to become a model for us: it is a great delight to Him when He can say, "Behold, I and the children which God has given me", Hebrews 2: 13. The children are those who take character from Him, so they become signs and wonders. Why? Because they are like Christ; they have come out as true children of Christ — that is what gives Him such delight.

They can be recognised as of Christ; nothing is of spiritual value with any of us but what is *of Christ*. There is no value attached to anything of Adam, but what is of Christ has divine value. He is presented here as the great Servant; He comes in to serve. Nothing could be more wonderful for us than to take up this path under the influence of Christ, as we reverence Him in affection. J.B.S. used to say, 'We first admire, then accept, and then adopt'. We first admire it with reverence and affection in Christ, we see how it surpasses everything else: He is "The chiefest among ten thousand". Then we accept it — there is no other divine path for us, no other spirit but that for us. There is a definite moment in the soul's history when we accept it, and then we come to adopt it, and spiritual power is needed for that, to adopt the features of Christ. The great point in Mark's gospel is that the kingdom comes in power; it is patterned in Luke, but in power in Mark.

Ques Does the dying of Jesus come in here?

CAC This is just the point where we come into that order of things. The Lord had been serving up to this point, but from this point forward it is a question of the dying of Jesus, the experimental giving up of all connected with His acceptance and service in Israel. He gave it all up. Paul could say, "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body", 2 Corinthians 4: 10. The life of Jesus is a life of serving love; the youngest of us can take it up. People talk of things being over the heads of the young, but this comes in at the level of our hearts.

Ques Is spiritual power love?

CAC I think it is, when you come to the root of it, because the life of God is love in activity; it is the very life of divine Persons. You could not have anything more powerful and energetic than that.

We have noticed that the Lord's service was closing, the final scenes were at hand. The Lord was coming up to Jerusalem to suffer and it was important that He should be seen at such a moment in all the dignity of His kingly rights, so the blind man addresses Him as Son of David. It was the first time such a title had been accorded Him in this gospel; it involves all the glory that attaches to Him in Psalm 72; He is the King's Son, the true Solomon. It is a little remarkable that it is only blind men who gave Him this title, save the Canaanitish woman who had no right to use it. It has often been said that the scribes had the thought that the opening of the eyes of the blind was the miracle reserved for the Messiah, Son of David; and it certainly was so in fact.

The ability to see is very important, especially at moments of crisis such as these. Bartimaeus says, "Rabboni, that I may see". The Lord in His kingly

rights gave to the remnant the ability to see, to perceive things according to God; and He is the only One still who can give us ability to perceive things according to God, to see the character of the moment, and what is suitable to the testimony at the moment. No doubt Bartimaeus represents the remnant to whom the Lord gave this ability of perception, the result of his seeing being that he followed Jesus in the way. He moved in harmony with the present movements of Jesus. It was said of the Son of David that He could hear the cry of the afflicted and save the souls of the needy. His kingly rights come out in that way; His kingly rights are exercised in priestly grace.

Mark 10 and 11 are most affecting: it was the closing moment and a very solemn time. *We* have come to a closing moment, too; there is a great analogy between the moment when the Lord was here and the present moment. The ability to see was of the greatest importance then and is now. We only get that ability directly from the Lord, so it says, "they that seek the Lord understand all things", Proverbs 28: 5. Those that seek the Lord get their eyes opened. John says, "we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true", 1 John 5: 20. It is a very blessed thing to be conscious of that. To have understanding would answer to opening of the eyes, and the question with us is, Is that our desire? "Rabboni, that I may see" was the blind man's great desire. It is only as the Son of God comes into our consciousness that we get an understanding. I do not think the statement, "the Son of God has come", refers merely to the historical fact of His incarnation; it involves the life and affection of His saints.

Ques Had the blind man partial sight before?

CAC He was evidently taught of God; he was one of those divinely taught. There is such a thing as spiritual vision. Paul prays in Ephesians 1, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him, being enlightened in the eyes of your heart". That is like the opening of the eyes; it is the specific act of divine Persons giving ability of perception so that there is understanding according to God of what is going on at the moment. There is nothing more important, especially in times of crisis; it is very important that we should be able to see at such a time.

Ques Would the Lord appreciate the blind man's desire?

CAC He would indeed, because He would become the supreme object of the one who sees. When the man opened his eyes he opened them on the Son of David, the Christ, and followed Him in the way. That must have been very delightful to the Lord.

Ques Does the challenge apply to us, too?

CAC Yes, there is great analogy in the present circumstances to those that were present then; the question of this world is the question of the kingly rights of Christ. In the next chapter it is entirely a question of the kingly rights of the Son of David, and I believe the giving of sight is divine ability to see what is connected with the kingly rights of Jesus Christ. It is most important, because those kingly rights are just about to be asserted, but, before they are asserted in a public way, have we spiritual vision to see what is connected with them? I would encourage myself and all my brethren to say "Rabboni, that I may see".

MARK 11

Mark 11

Ques What is the difference between "Son of David" and "Son of man"?

CAC As presented in this gospel the difference would be rather between His kingly rights and His service. The Lord has been seen in this gospel as engaged in the service of men. He comes in as a bondman acquired of men; He comes in to serve man, and He carries that to the point of giving His life a ransom for many. But chapter 11 brings in a different subject; it is a question of the kingly rights of Christ. It is a great thing to see His kingly rights and to be in accord with them. It is an immense thing at the present time to be prepared in the light of that for suffering, to be disallowed of men in the sense of the kingly rights of Christ, and then to see how He has claimed us. So far in this gospel we have been occupied with the way need claims His service and gets His service, but when we come to chapter 11 it is the other side — His claims. He asserts His rights, He claims the colt for Himself, "The Lord hath need of him". The point is that the Son of David is Jehovah. Jehovah opens the eyes of the blind; David's Son is David's Lord. It involves a discerning of the fact that the Son of David is Jehovah. If you take the desire to see in the light of what it illustrates, it is the desire to have the capacity to perceive all connected with the One who is going up to suffer, but He goes as the One in whom all kingly rights are vested. He goes to suffer in that character, as rejected in His service, and His hands wounded in the house of His friends. This means that His service was rejected, not His hands wounded at the cross: those hands that were unwearied in their ministry were wounded, and the service of love refused. That is the cup He drank, love's deep sorrow in having His service refused. He goes up outwardly as Jesus of Nazareth, but if we have spiritual vision, we see He is invested with all kingly rights, and that He claims us absolutely for Himself. It is no question of our need claiming Him here; but that He in kingly rights claims us for Himself. I hope we have all been touched in reading this gospel and seeing how need claims Him, but there is another side not to be overlooked, and that is He has kingly rights which claim us. It is a question of what He needs, and with kingly rights there is power — He must have what He needs — the colt.

Bartimaeus shows the activity of the Lord under which we must come if we are to have any perception of the situation. Everyone in christendom has a Bible, and many are conversant with it, but the mass of christendom have no perception of the situation. Bartimaeus is the contrast to the young man in the previous chapter who allowed his possessions to be a snare to him.

Bartimaeus, though poor, has something to throw away and he throws it away. If we want to have the Son of God in our lives we must throw away our garments.

Ques Will you tell us about the title Son of man?

CAC It is a wide title, and hence the gentiles are brought in; but it involves suffering and death, because it involves taking up every question connected with man and glorifying God about it. Then as having done that He is morally entitled to be Head of God's universe and have all things put under His feet. He rules absolutely as competent and qualified to do so; He is rightly placed over all things.

Ques Would you present kingly rights in preaching the gospel?

CAC Paul must have, because it went about that he said there was "another king, one Jesus". It is part of the good news that God is going to bring to an end sin and confusion, and that kingly rights are vested in Jesus; it is an important part of the testimony to make that known. We find here remarkable testimony, how He is acclaimed in relation to the coming kingdom. It is what many are doing now.

Ques Do kingly rights differ from His rights as Lord?

CAC As Lord He has universal rights, He is Lord of all, but His kingly rights as Messiah are more connected with Israel. He is in the midst of Israel here, and He is going to suffer, but to those who have their eyes opened and who know Him He is King, He is vested with kingly rights.

Ques Is there any significance in the setting of this incident — the crossways?

CAC I think the Lord has come to the moment of which Daniel had spoken when he prophesied of Messiah the Prince. There was a definite period fixed and it was necessary that He should come into Jerusalem as Messiah the Prince; it pleased God to make everything subservient to that. The colt and the crowd and everything were subservient to the fact the Lord should appear as Israel's King, "Behold thy King cometh".

Ques Would you tell us its connection with the present crisis and our having sight?

CAC I think we should all admit that the present is a very critical moment, and that it is a question of confessing the rights of Christ. It is largely the testimony that we should confess the rights of Christ, that we should carry Him in testimony. That is what is set forth in the colt. He was an unsubdued creature, but the Lord in asserting His rights brings this creature into absolute

subjection to Himself, so that it carries Him in testimony. It is a striking picture and represents what man is naturally, but the Lord subdues him. We get it illustrated in Saul of Tarsus; he was an unsubdued, untamed colt. Man is said to be a wild ass, a colt. "The Lord hath need of him" — there is that side of the truth that every one of us is absolutely claimed and Christ has the right to claim us because all the rights of God are vested in Him.

Ques Was the colt being tied providential?

CAC Yes, God has in view from the outset what He is going to do. Saul was tied from the outset, he says, "God, who set me apart even from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace", Galatians 1: 15. He was secured from the outset; it was the exercise of sovereign rights.

Ques What is the force of the crossway?

CAC It was not the main street. The colt was not in the king's highway, but in the crossway where we all were. It suggests that man is out of the way.

We only carry the Lord in testimony as we are subdued to Him. There is a difference between the colt and the crowd. The crowd was acclaiming Christ and honouring Him, but the colt sets forth a creature subdued to Him so as to carry Him. Many may be by divine grace ready to acclaim and honour the Lord, yet not at all personally subdued to Him so as to carry Him in testimony through the scene of His reproach.

Ques How does the subduing take place?

CAC By the power vested in the Lord Himself. Here is an untamed creature with no desire to be subject; it was not broken in — "upon which no child of man has ever sat", yet the Lord asserts His rights to have that creature and to bring it into perfect subjection to Himself. The epistle to the Philippians speaks of "the power which he has even to subdue all things to himself". There is a power vested in that Person. There was no desire in Saul of Tarsus to be subject, just the opposite. There was in him the most intense and inveterate opposition, he was a thoroughly unbroken man, yet the Lord subdues him in a moment. It is a sovereign matter and we should greatly covet to come under that subduing power. What greater honour could God put on anybody than to bring them into such subjugation to Christ that they are able to carry Him in testimony in the full recognition of His kingly rights! He has an absolute right to control us. There are many shouting Hosanna today who are not prepared to be subdued to Christ.

Ques Why did not the Lord fetch the colt Himself?

CAC The Lord likes to be served by His servants; we find the service of Ananias in connection with Saul. The subduing is the direct influence of the Lord applied to us sovereignly without any sort of condition being there on our side to help it on. The Lord says of Saul, I have need of him. God presents these things to us to awaken desire; God's sovereignty does not exclude desire on our part.

Ques It creates desire, but then, if it is connected with sovereignty, is it within our reach?

CAC Yes, I think the sovereignty of God has put it within our reach. He has put us where such exercises are raised. We all obtain peculiar favour in the sovereignty of God. It is in the sovereignty of God that we are here tonight and He has put very great spiritual privileges within our reach. To find that I have been the subject of sovereign favour is one of the most subduing things; though I have deserved nothing and had no more claim than others, yet peculiar favour has been shown me!

A great many have the truth of the Lord's coming, and they are ready to acclaim Him as the One who is coming in to have His rights as King; many are writing books and shouting Hosanna, but perhaps not identified with the testimony itself. Now is the time for the testimony; the rights of Christ are as great this minute as they ever will be when He takes kingly power and everything is in subjection to Him. His rights are as great now as then, and the question raised now is not whether we are ready to acclaim His rights which He will soon exercise, but whether we have come personally under His subduing influence so that we carry the testimony of what He is through the world. That is the form which the rights of Christ take in their claim on us now. The rights of Christ are paramount; no one has any claim — neither the colt nor its owner has any rights in the presence of the rights of Christ. Man ties us up but the Lord looses us; we are loosed so that we may be serviceable to Him. It is a greater thing to carry Christ in testimony than to shout abroad concerning the glory of the coming kingdom, though those who do it have their place in the public ways of God.

Ques Would this be connected with, "We have come to mount Zion"?

CAC We have come to it now. It is our privilege to be like the 144,000 in Revelation 14, who were with Him on mount Zion before the kingdom was set up. We are privileged to be with Him now in the recognition of His kingly rights before they are publicly acknowledged.

It was a wonderful opportunity for the daughter of Zion when her King came in this way — a lowly King — but having an infinite salvation in Himself. There

seems to be a certain analogy between the Lord's presentation of Himself to the daughter of Zion, and His presentation of Himself to the church as the "root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star", Revelation 22: 16. He presented Himself to the affections of the daughter of Zion as having in Himself everything she needed, her King and salvation. The complete salvation of Jehovah was there in His Person for the daughter of Zion. In a certain way the Lord is presenting Himself to the assembly now in that character. What is learned of Himself will give character to the coming day. We learn the blessedness of the coming King, not that He is exactly King to us, but we learn Him as lowly and having salvation — it is all in Himself. There is no true, spiritual deliverance for any of us except what we find in Himself; it is only as that Person acquires His place in our affections that we know what it is to be delivered from what is not of God.

We have to learn that, while the Lord comes in and presents Himself in the blessedness of His lowly character and in the wealth of salvation that is in Himself, yet He comes in as entitled to pass everything under His scrutiny and to have a judgment as to all that goes on in the christian profession. So He asserted His kingly rights and expressed His judgment on all that went on in the temple in that way. One side is His presenting Himself in His affections to His people, and the other side has to do with His moral judgment of all things. Both are very important.

The hunger of the Lord, His inward cravings, could not be satisfied from anything that Israel after the flesh, or indeed man after the flesh, brought forth. It is only as He Himself is received and honoured, the lowly One who carries all the power of God's salvation in Himself, can there be any fruit to answer the cravings of His heart. "From me is thy fruit found", He says by the utterance of the prophetic Spirit to Israel; Hosea 14: 8. We should receive Him in responsive Hosannas. Hosanna means, Save now: it is a time now when we can lift up our hearts and say Hosanna. The great deliverance God has effected for His people in these last days has been brought about by the influence of that Person; we should all be still trammelled and filled by what is of man if we had not come under the influence of Christ.

Ques Is learning the cursing of the fig-tree the beginning of having right thoughts of man?

CAC Yes, the Lord would teach us, not only that Israel and man after the flesh have utterly failed to produce any fruit for God, but there is never to be any fruit from that. There is to be no expectation from the flesh henceforth. The two things go together: an intense appreciation of Christ, and a complete distrust of the flesh — the one suggests the other. We need to get a vision of

the One who thus presents Himself, and we cannot doubt that the Lord presents Himself at the end in a remarkable way to the assembly. There is analogy between His saying, "I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star", and His presenting Himself as the lowly King to the daughter of Zion. It is a closing action at the end of the period, but everything needed for salvation was there in His Person, and, when we see that, we are prepared to accept His judgments on everything contrary to God. One thinks of the Lord at the present moment as looking round (verse 11). "He entered into Jerusalem and into the temple; and having looked round on all things, the hour being already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve". One feels that is very much what the Lord is doing today, looking round on all things. It is not exactly action, but scrutiny and discernment. He is looking round on all things, on the whole profession. There is no precipitate action, but He is looking round with deliberation and calmness and kingly dignity. The Lord values moral judgment more than action. He has a moral judgment on everything, He discerns everything contrary to God and Himself, and He is seeking to have His own in correspondence with His moral judgment, so He retires to Bethany with the twelve. It is very like the place of moral separation into which He calls His own today. We get hearts there to anoint Him. He was anointed at Bethany, a little circle where the wealth and rights of His Person were recognised, and became the subject of adoring affections. What a privilege to have a judgment in correspondence with the Lord as to all that is going on, to be in moral accord with Him and to know a sweet retreat! What must Bethany have been to the Lord! We do not know that He ever spent a night in Jerusalem; He had no resting-place there, but in Bethany He had a resting-place in the circle of family affections where He was greatly appreciated. The daughter of Zion should have greeted her King; she should have crowned Him.

Ques Would this correspond with the movement ninety years ago?

CAC The fact that there was a movement ninety years ago would not affect us now. The Lord is looking round on all things now, and while He does not act He forms a definite moral judgment. It is most important that the saints should have a moral judgment and not only come into outward separation.

Ques Is it at Bethany that moral judgment is arrived at?

CAC We could not enjoy companionship with the Lord at Bethany unless we had first arrived at moral judgment in concert with Him. "He went out to Bethany with the twelve". He went out carrying His company with Him, and they went out as in correspondence with Him.

Ques Many do not go here and there because they think it is contrary to the rules of brethren.

CAC Yes, that makes it so important that we should have a moral judgment, spiritual understanding for the present moment. Being in a certain position religiously will not secure anything for the Lord, but having a moral judgment in accord with His own is of great value, and it is really fruit. Jehovah looked for fruit from Israel, Zion's King looked for a state of hearts and minds in correspondence with Himself, but He did not find it. "He looked for justice, and behold, blood-shedding; for righteousness, and behold, a cry", Isaiah 5: 7. Jehovah looked for what would correspond with Himself and did not find it in Israel. The Lord's hunger was for what would correspond with Himself; nothing but that could satisfy Him. The Lord shows us that the product of man in the flesh could never satisfy His hunger; nothing could satisfy the cravings of His inward being but what was in correspondence with Himself. Israel was not, and the assembly as a public profession is not.

Ques Numbers come out in separation. Does the Lord look for all such to have moral judgment?

CAC The affections of the Lord embrace every true saint, and He regards them all as divinely called to the fellowship, but nothing will satisfy His heart but that they should be in accord with Himself. He will place us all in accord in glory. He is presenting Himself in a peculiar way to bring them into accord with Himself; even to Laodicea He says, "If any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me", Revelation 3: 20. He says, as it were, I will bring him into communion with myself: that is what he is seeking to do for the whole assembly. It is the twelve, the completed company. The Lord is jealous about the completeness of the assembly; He will not leave one out.

Ques Is Bethany a response to the presentation of Himself?

CAC I think it is. It is the spot where there is a family circle, it is where the Lord was received, appreciated and honoured; and where He was anointed. It is wonderful to think that there is a circle like that today. What a privilege to be where the lowly One who has salvation is received and honoured! We look to Him alone for salvation, and we say Hosanna to Him; no one else can save us. In the midst of a corrupt christendom, who can save us but the One who has salvation? There is nothing in outward things to satisfy the Lord's hunger, but we can be sure that He found something at Bethany to satisfy His hunger — they made Him a supper and ministered to Him. Man after the flesh could never satisfy Him — "their heart is far from me". We all have to learn to distinguish between leaves and fruit. There are many leaves about that look

very nice; they are the proper beauty of the tree, but we have to discern between them and the fruit.

Ques In moments of difficulty and trouble Hosanna is a good cry for us?

CAC Yes, we have to learn to say it in all our exercises. If you come to the morning meeting and find yourself out of tune, you cannot shake off that business worry, what are you to do if you cannot say, Hosanna!

Ques What about "in the highest"?

CAC It implies the absolute supremacy of the Lord in His saving power. It is a quotation from Psalm 118, and it involves the sending of prosperity, "Oh save, Jehovah, I beseech thee; Jehovah, I beseech thee, Oh send prosperity! Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah". You can always say Hosanna to Him, whatever difficulty you are in, whatever the state of soul, however low the key. You can always say Hosanna even when perhaps you cannot say Hallelujah. I have come to a meeting feeling right down low — what can I say? Hosanna. It brings in the power of salvation; we have to say Hosanna to beseech that blessed One to give prosperity. What a great thing it is to be in divine prosperity! In the last days it will be possible for the remnant, the true daughter of Zion, to be in spiritual prosperity, and that in spite of the disorder and corruption in the temple and in the city. If that lowly King who had salvation is before their hearts, they can say Hosanna to Him, they can be in prosperity, and so can we.

Ques What is to bring about Bethany conditions with us?

CAC I suppose they are brought about as we come under the influence of His love. The Lord is known in Bethany; there was a household there pre-eminently marked as subjects of the love of Jesus, and there they learned to see the glory of God and the glory of the Son of God.

Ques Does the Lord commit His rights in relation to Israel to the custody of those who love Him and would cherish them?

CAC Yes, His kingly rights, all that is due to Him now, are cherished in the affections of the bride. She is at the present moment the custodian of all His rights. What a treasure to have enshrined in our hearts! If you confess His rights you will be careful that those rights should be maintained by you personally and you would not accept compromise with that which denies His rights. You would have no more sympathy with selling and buying in the temple than He had. Man is using divine things with a selfish motive, turning every sacrifice of God into selfishness. The Canaanite is the trader, and man is so base that he makes gain for himself out of God's things. It is like the

ultimate point of man's baseness that he will make gain out of God's things for himself. The Lord has a definite judgment on it all. We can see how christendom is full of it, and we have to watch it in ourselves lest that element come in, "all seek their own" (Philippians 2: 21), that in principle is the Canaanite.

I think the Lord would have us to understand as to the fig-tree. The Lord gave the disciples further instruction when they saw that it was withered away: He told them to have faith in God, not to have before them what was great in man's eyes. Israel was in man's eyes great for God, the temple and all its services were like a great mountain, apparently great for God. The Lord would give them a judgment of what was about to be set aside in His own death. We see in His own cross and death the fig-tree withered up from the roots by divine judgment; it was not decay at all but divine judgment, withered from the roots.

Ques It is important for us to see that we are all capable of the Canaanite in ourselves?

CAC Yes, we have all the corruption of christendom in our own flesh. There is not a single bit of corruption in christendom that I cannot find the germ of in myself, and I must have the moral judgment of it. It makes one cry Hosanna, and one learns the principle of exclusiveness in one's own private exercises — the man after the flesh must be excluded altogether.

The Lord suffered not that anyone should carry any package through the temple: there is no place there for any private or personal interest. A package or vessel would suggest a man carrying something which was concerned with his private interest.

Ques What does the temple set forth in contrast to the house?

CAC The temple is the house, but I suppose the thoughts are different. The house is more where God dwells, and the temple is more the place where we get the communications of His mind. We connect the heart of God with the house and the mind of God with the temple. The heart of God comes out in connection with the house — it was to be the house of prayer for all nations. What an immense conception of the heart of God, a house of prayer set up for all nations, not only for Israel but a place where the universal beneficence of the heart of God is known! It is illimitable and goes out to all nations. How falsified man has made it — a den of robbers! Instead of people finding comfort there and getting everything they came for, they come to be robbed.

It is the result of having salvation that the voice of triumph and salvation is found in the tabernacle of the righteous. You must have it in your own house

first before you can know the blessedness of it in God's house. Your own house must be first in order and then God's house can be cared for.

Ques What does this mountain refer to?

CAC I think the Lord uses a figure that is of wide application; a mountain is that which is great in the eyes of men. I have no doubt it refers to the place which judaism had in the eyes of men. The temple with all its services, its ancient glory and the traditional reverence attached to it, was great, and the disciples needed to be delivered from that. There is no greater proof of faith than to be delivered from the influence of all that is accounted great; certain things are accounted great as to this world, but faith would deliver us from them. It seems to me that, as seeking to walk in faith, we would find ourselves in the presence of mountains, and one's own particular difficulty seems the biggest mountain, but faith in God will get rid of every mountain. It may be the great external mountain like the christian profession today, which has such a tremendous influence over people that they could not entertain the thought of coming into separation from it; or it may be in the individual pathway there is what seems to the soul a mountain, but faith gives power to get rid of either mountain. The secret of deliverance is to have faith in God.

Ques Would standing praying (verse 25) enable one to be in the good of the house?

CAC I think so. We would be in the good of the house and in harmony with the spirit of the house. To pray intimates harmony with God and intense desire of heart that God's will should prevail. What does a man pray for if he is not in harmony with God and desiring God's will to prevail? We cannot pray if we are not filled with the spirit of forgiveness. We cannot address God if we are entirely out of harmony with everything in the heart of God. What marks the heart of God is beneficence, unlimited beneficence for all men, and along with it this beautiful spirit of forgiveness. If people find in praying that they have an unforgiving spirit, the way to get rid of it is to come into the atmosphere of the house; we cannot bring it there. The Lord suggests in these verses the importance of the spirit in which we pray; in the act of praying our spirit is most important.

Following the truth of this chapter you cease to have any expectation from the flesh in yourself or in anyone else; all your expectation centres in God. You do not need to look to the world, to anyone here, or to any mountain; you can get all you need from God, but in order to get what you need from God you must be in correspondence with God. God gives everything to a man who is in correspondence with Himself; we do not get our prayers answered sometimes because we are not in correspondence with Him. God has to wait until we get

our spirits into correspondence with Himself, and then He answers our prayers.

Ques What is the meaning of "heard because of his piety", Hebrews 5: 7?

CAC It is a wonderful expression connected with the Lord, and it illustrates what we are speaking of. There was with the Lord perfect correspondence to the mind of God; He was in full recognition of all that death was according to the divine estimate of it. We might certainly say that no one else ever had a full pious sense of what death was. He prayed in perfect correspondence with the mind of God, so He was heard because of His piety and His prayer was answered in resurrection — "He asked life of thee; thou gavest it him, length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great through thy salvation", Psalm 21: 4, 5. He had prayed in perfect correspondence with God; He felt the pressure of death as God intended man should feel it. No one but the blessed God felt it in full measure. True prayer is that those who are praying pray in perfect intelligence and correspondence with the will of God. I have said that every true prayer is minted in heaven, and therefore, when you bring it back and present it at heaven's treasury, it must be honoured because it came from there. It supposes that not a single prayer you present is a carnal one; no fleshly desire is there. That is all judged in the death of Christ, and now you have faith in God, you enter this wonderful experience down here in the midst of exercises and perplexities, but everyone is a benefit to you because it becomes an opportunity to find out experimentally what a God you have. The reason why we have not more faith in God is because we give so much place to the flesh. This whole scene supposes moral discernment and judgment first, and then the clearing up of things so that they are brought into suitability to God; no hindrance to prayer, but the spirit of forgiveness, which is the true spirit of God's house — a wonderful triumph.

There is a striking contrast suggested here: an inside circle where things are adjusted and brought into correspondence with the One who has royal rights; and an outside circle where there is no appreciation of Him. They come cavilling and asking questions, by what authority He does these things, and they only prove that they are characterised by utter lack of moral discernment.

The fig-tree largely represents righteousness which the Lord craves to find in His people. He loves righteousness, that is, what corresponds with Himself. If we see that man after the flesh is judged, we do not want to give any place to that man's desires or to the arrangements that he may set up; we see his true character is offensive before God. A good many of us have had to prove and find it dried up by the roots!

There are manifestly two parts in the presentation of the Lord in this gospel. The first part presents the whole of His service which He rendered to men in their varied and manifold needs. Then at the end of the gospel we have the second part; we see the Lord in the exercising of His rights, bringing everything under the test of His own Person.

What we see in this chapter (verses 27 - 33) is the complete blindness of those who were in the place of responsible authority; they were completely blind to all that was there. The Lord compels them to confess their blindness, and He will always do that; sooner or later He will bring every one of us to the acknowledgment of the truth. The light was there, but they could not discern it. They might as well have asked the sun by what authority it shone in the heavens; it would have been an equally suitable and pertinent question.

Ques Why did the Lord bring in the baptism of John in this connection?

CAC I think it brought their whole state to light, and shows how the Lord in the simplest way can bring to light the real state of man's heart and the motives that control him, and actually make him confess it in spite of his unwillingness to do so. The Lord in exercising His own rights can make man confess his true state. It must have been a terrible humiliation to have to say, "We cannot tell".

He came to the daughter of Zion as her King and He came in divine character as the lowly One and as having salvation in Himself; but then all that meant the full exposure of everything — whether the defiled temple, or the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees, or the whole nation — all were exposed. The Lord raises the question of moral conditions; that is the question which John's ministry raised at the outset. It was a call to repentance in the light of the coming King, which found out every exercised soul in Israel. They responded to it; many, as we should say, were not even converted, not the subjects of the work of God; but they recognised the call to repentance. It was a call to the nation, and a door open to the possibility of taking right ground with God. It is always open to us to do the same. Christendom and all of us are being tested, as judaism was, as to whether we are prepared to take right ground with God — ground on which He can bless and enrich us. The greatness of His salvation is in Christ.

What we find with these people is they had no moral exercise at all. The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees had no moral discernment or exercise as to their place with God; their great concern and desire was to maintain their place with the people, and they were in a state of unbelief.

Ques What do you mean by right ground with God?

CAC The ground on which John's baptism put people. The Lord said, "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness"

The Lord could identify Himself with what was right; the fact was that the axe was laid to the root of the tree, and no other righteousness was possible to man but the recognition of that. It is comforting to be told that the axe is laid to the root of the tree; every bit of man after the flesh has been cut down in holy judgment. The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees could not come there because it was giving up their whole status; they were not competent to come there; they had no discernment of the suitability of it.

Ques Do we see the ground of righteousness in Romans 3?

CAC Yes. Romans 3 is one of the most comforting chapters in the Bible. The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees were not on the ground of righteousness, and in the last days the christian profession is not. The first thing we have to follow is righteousness and then faith. Righteousness is that we recognise the state of man after the flesh, and have come into accord with God's judgment of that man. Faith brings in all that is of God and of Christ.

Ques Is that taking up the truth of our baptism?

CAC Yes, that is what it is, so that baptism is a tremendous thing if we think of it rightly. It is moral discernment. The Pharisees had no moral discernment, and the Lord made them own it: He made them say, "We cannot tell". This is very like the state of things today. People will not commit themselves entirely to God's righteousness; they want to establish their own righteousness. I think that is the great analogy between the circumstances in which the Lord was found here and those in which we are found in the last days. There is a divine profession, a profession which has been divine in character originally.

Ques Is the Lord still carrying on the work of cleansing?

CAC I think He is, and morally judging everything; not outwardly and manifestly, but morally. The Lord refuses to stand at man's bar. They call Him to account, but He refuses to stand there on moral grounds; that is, on the ground of their confessed blindness and inability to see whether the things of God are of heaven or of men. We are all tested by our discernment of things. There are certain things now, as there were then, which are of heaven; and there are certain other things which are of men, and we have to exercise a judgment. There are certain things in the christian profession which every one of us here tonight is convinced are of heaven,

and certain other things which are of men. Now can we clearly and definitely pronounce judgment on these things? The ability to discern is in the Spirit,

and the saints as having the Spirit have their eyes open. Ananias says to Paul, "the Lord has sent me, ... that thou mightest see, and be filled with the Holy Spirit", Acts 9: 17. If people follow their spiritual intuitions instead of listening to every voice that comes along, they will have a clear thought about things; they will not say, We cannot tell, for they will be able to tell. I have said sometimes that it is a peculiar favour to be living in a time when people are left to do what is right in their own eyes, because it brings to light what is right in their eyes. We are tested all the time. Are the things of men right? If they are, we should follow them; but, if the things of heaven and of the Spirit are right, we should follow *them*. Everybody shows up where he is; we are all being tested, every one of us. In Revelation 2 and 3 it is not only what the Lord says to the assemblies, but what the Spirit says. What the Lord said was all said at once, and John wrote it down; but the Spirit has kept on speaking ever since. The Spirit is always speaking to the assemblies on the line of moral discernment, of the refusing of all that is of men, and the accepting and adhering to what is of heaven. By the grace of God I want to pursue what is of heaven, and I hope we are all set for that.

Ques Does the Holy Spirit always speak through the Scriptures?

CAC He will always be in accord with the Scriptures. What the Spirit says can always be tested and approved by the Scriptures.

MARK 12

Mark 12

This section of the gospel is leading to the fact that we have a company in the midst of an unfaithful profession in which the prominent men refused the Lord. The builders, the active energetic men of the profession, refused the Cornerstone; but there was a company who recognised the Son and said, "This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes". It brings us to this that we see Christ in His glorious exaltation and eminence as Head of the corner; we have reached a fine point then.

The Lord goes on with His arraignment of the profession. It is solemn to remember that this is not man in his natural darkness, but man illuminated by God with the sacred oracles, with the temple and the services of God. It corresponds precisely with the present condition of christendom, where we have people who profess to carry on divine service and to be doing what is pleasing to God. It is striking what we get out of these parables; we do not take sufficient account of them. Who but the Lord could have put such a simple picture that a child could follow it? There are great moral questions involved in it.

It is wonderful light on the character of the blessed God that He should lay Himself out to acquire pleasure from men — that is the idea in planting a vineyard. It is not a kind of arbitrary exactingness, but the desire of the blessed God to have pleasure in men. He planted a vineyard, He brought a vine out of Egypt and set up a vineyard with everything that is suitable. He put a fence around it; Israel has been encircled by divine protection. As long as they were faithful to God, they were not harassed by enemies; it was only when they became unfaithful that God let down the hedge and let the wild boar ravage them. Normally He put His protecting hedge around them, in order that they might be perfectly free to minister joy to the heart of God. We are something like that; we have not been hindered from ministering to the pleasure of God by any outward hindrances. At the end of Psalm 80 when they turn to Christ they speak of themselves as a vine made strong for Jehovah. That vine had been wasted and trampled down by the boar from the wood, and then they say, "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou hast made strong for thyself" — they fall back on Christ. If there is to be any fruit for God, it must be by Christ getting His place.

And he "dug a wine-vat". I think God, in putting His sanctuary among His people, provided them with a wine-vat; He gave a place where all the sweet

affections and praises of His people might flow out to Himself. His sanctuary was among them; that was like a wine-vat.

And he "built a tower" — God set His name among them; there was a spot where Jehovah set His name. That meant that all that lay in that name was available for them to call upon and utilise, so that they were ever under divine protection.

He did everything so that they might be pleasurable to Him. "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower" — God in setting His name in the midst of His people provided them with a strong tower that would resist every foe; it was a source of strength in every weakness, so that the wine-vat might be filled right up with wine to cheer the heart of God and man.

Ques You mean that all should contribute?

CAC Yes, God meant all His people to express their love to Him; His was a well-earned love. He did everything for them, He calls attention to that in Isaiah 5: "What was there yet to do to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" He has done everything, and in a certain sense all that He did in a typical way for Israel He has done actually for us. They were redeemed and protected externally, but with us it is a spiritual thing. What about the fruit? What about the wine-vat? The Lord has provided that His people should always be gathered together in common joy with Him, so that He might have His pleasure in them.

The Lord says, "He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others". To whom does He give the vineyard? The church has come provisionally into that place, to yield fruit in which Israel so miserably failed. The church, viewed as a public profession, has failed as miserably as Israel did, but, as there was a remnant in Israel, so now in the christian profession there are those in whom and from whom God is getting the desired fruit that His heart longed for. It should be our exercise to "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart", 2 Timothy 2: 22. God never gives up His desire for fruit. He has provided everything so that fruit might be brought forth; therefore we are left without excuse. It is wonderful the pleasure God finds in those who judge themselves and appreciate Christ, and there is no other way of producing fruit for God — all fruit for God is summed up in that. If a man judges himself God gets great joy — look at the joy God gets in Luke 15 in the sinner repenting. If a man appreciates Christ there is fruit for God, because if one appreciates Christ there must flow forth praise and thanksgiving and joy in the presence of all the blessedness of Christ; and then God gets what makes His heart glad.

We come into the value of every ministry and servant that God has sent. There was not a single servant He ever sent to Israel whose ministry we are deprived of, and we are brought into the good of His sending His beloved Son. Every visitation of the ends of the ages is met on us; every divine appearing to man is brought to bear on us with the view of our being fruitful. We find that the gentiles, if they did not continue in the goodness of God, would be cut off; being fruitful for God depends on continuing in the goodness of God. The same thing will happen again. The place of testimony, of fruit-bearing will pass on to another company; the christian profession has failed as the Jew has failed, but God is maintaining His testimony and getting His portion, and He gets it from those who recognise what has happened in regard of Christ. He has been killed here and has been cast out of the vineyard; men have taken the vineyard as their own, and come into the state of which Hosea spoke: "Israel is an unpruned vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself". That is the condition of things generally in the christian profession, an undisciplined, unsubdued state, all seeking "their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ". If we recognise the place of Christ as cast out and disallowed of men, we shall see the place He is set in as Head of the corner. What a joy for God when a few saints can look up adoringly and see the wonderful place God has given to Christ! Is there nothing for the divine pleasure in that? Yes, there is every thing for the divine pleasure. All hangs on that Stone. God is working in His powerful grace to bring about that in His people now, those who are born of God and indwelt by the Spirit, and the exercise for us is how far these characteristics are being developed in us so that there is fruit for God in us. Are we set for exalting the things that are of man here, or the Man whom God has made Head of the corner? Babylon is set for the exaltation of the man who is *here*, but the Spirit of God is set for the exaltation of the Man who is *there*. In the recognition of failure there is fruit that is very pleasurable to God. If I go to God and tell Him that I do not appreciate Christ a tenth part as much as I should like to do, that is very fragrant to God. I hope every one here tonight would say with sincerity in the presence of God, 'I do not appreciate that blessed Christ of God a tenth part as much as I ought or should like to do'. What is wonderful in our eyes is the Stone — the One disallowed of men but chosen of God and precious. When we think about that wonderful Stone, we get near to God and to His thoughts of Christ, and we do not even get occupied with the small measure of our thoughts about Him; we are occupied with immense delight in Him. The Spirit of God would give us an extraordinary sense of the place of Christ — He is qualified to be Head of the corner, and to give character to the whole structure that God is building up to His praise. We see the glorious pre-eminence and suitability of Christ to be chief ornament of that structure; He is the chief Cornerstone. The Jew and the gentile are

builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit in order that there may be a structure in which Christ is recognised as the chief Cornerstone — that is something for God's pleasure. We come among a few people; they may be a despised and illiterate people externally, nonentities as to this world, but we find those people uniting in saying, 'Christ is the One to be honoured'. The wisdom and power of God will give character to the whole structure which God is now building, and Christ will give character to the whole universe of bliss which God will dwell in eternally. If we recognise that, there will be some wine in the wine-vat.

Christ is disallowed of men, and the previous chapters show that if we appreciate Him we must follow in His pathway, and that is the cross. If we follow Him we shall not be accredited with a place accorded us in this world; we shall have a place of reproach, but that is the place where there is joy in ministering to the heart of God.

I think we see the Lord here as the embodiment of divine wisdom in bringing the light of God to bear on the present conditions. The first twelve verses of this chapter seem to bring Him before us as the representative of the rights and authority of God in the pains He had taken to secure fruit for Himself. There was fruit for God in those who judged themselves and who recognised the wonderful place of Christ; they were those whom God could delight in. I am referring to those who could say, "This is of the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes" (verse 11). They recognised the wonderful place Christ had with God; though, speaking generally, there was no recognition of that. There was no recognition of the complete failure of man after the flesh, and therefore no appreciation of Christ; but there were those of whom it was prophetically spoken who would discern the place of Christ as the Head of the corner, "the stone which the builders rejected, this has become the corner-stone; this is of the Lord and it is wonderful in our eyes". All that God has secured for His pleasure now is found in connection with the recognition of the utter fruitlessness of the man after the flesh, but the delight and the appreciation of Christ which we have will put some wine in the wine-vat. All the product of divine work is outside the man after the flesh.

Ques Is that the way fruit is being developed in this chapter?

CAC Yes, and it is that which God is bent on getting, because we find that He will give the vineyard to others. The idea of fruit is not abandoned; it passes over to another company. The Lord never abandons any thought He has once entertained. We see in the chapter before us how He secures fruit in resurrection; all is secured by the power of God, so that faith delights ever to say, "This is the Lord's doing". The wisdom of God comes in in contrast to all

the thoughts of man. There is a great analogy between the position in which the Lord is found and in which we are found. The Lord was here at the end of a profession which was originally of God, but which had come into a thoroughly fruitless state; that is the position in which we are found. We are at the end of the history of a profession which was originally of God, but which has proved fruitless. At such a time as this it is an immense gain to have the light of the wisdom of God upon the situation.

Ques Why does this incident of giving tribute to Caesar come in?

CAC It suggests that the true state of things publicly must be recognised. It is a most important result of divine wisdom that we recognise the public condition of things; there has to be confession of failure, and all that is pretentious must be destroyed. The fact that they were tributary to a gentile power was evidence that they were not fruitful to God. If they had rendered what was due to God they would not have been tributary to a gentile power. Yet instead of being exercised along moral lines they were exercised in seeking to catch the Lord in His words. The Lord emphasises the question of what is for God now. Divine wisdom always leads us to consider for God. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom", Proverbs 9: 10. The first element of wisdom is that it sets you in relation to God. God gives us the spirit of power and love and wise discretion, which is very necessary at the end of the day. The effect would be that there would be consideration for God.

Rem The pennies had Caesar's image upon them, which showed they belonged to Caesar, and man has the image of God and belongs to God. While Caesar is getting his pennies, God is also getting His, and there is fruit for God.

CAC Yes. Whatever exercise comes on the saints in the government of God, if accepted, would lead to fruit for God. This condition was the result of the government of God; I refer to their having to pay tribute to Caesar. If that had been owned, and they had been submissive and subject, it would have opened the way for God to show the character of His blessing in a resurrection order.

Ques What answers now morally to being under Caesar?

CAC I suppose the Christian profession has fallen under the power of the world, has been delivered over to it governmentally on account of the way the lordship and headship of Christ and the presence of the Spirit have been set aside. As a governmental consequence the Christian profession has come under the authority of man. If that were felt and owned, and there was a recognition of God, we should learn the secret of what God has secured for His own pleasure in resurrection.

Ques In a sphere where the flesh is excluded and set aside and dealt with, and Christ is enthroned?

CAC Yes, if there were no resurrection, there would be nothing for God at all.

Ques Is it in that way that Christ is a stone of stumbling?

CAC Yes, the prophet said long before that He was either a stone of stumbling or a sanctuary. If we are not brought under the influence of Christ He is simply a stone of stumbling; if we give Him His place He becomes a sanctuary. Peter says, "sanctify the Lord the Christ in your hearts", 1 Peter 3: 15.

Ques You were speaking at the beginning about the way wisdom comes in. What had you in your mind?

CAC The light of the wisdom of God is thrown on the whole position. Wisdom consists in giving God His place, and having regard to that which is due to Him, and which He has secured for Himself. He is working in wisdom to secure His own ends. He will secure them and does now morally, as we see in the widow who loved Him with all her heart. She cast into the treasury all she had; she kept nothing back everything she had was devoted to God.

There was exposure of the whole situation in which they were found, but there was light in Christ and Christ exalted; that comes in in David's Lord.

Rem The earlier chapters were connected with the temple; but instead of in the temple seeking to get God's mind they were bringing these charges and foolish questions.

CAC Quite so, but all comes out nevertheless. The Lord would lead to a spiritual apprehension of the Scriptures. The Sadducees, in saying there was no resurrection, greatly erred; they were altogether on the line of the natural, but the Lord would bring in the spiritual.

Ques Do you think we might become Sadducees by not giving up the natural?

CAC I do. All that is under death cannot afford pleasure to God. He is the God of the living, and if things are to be for His pleasure death must be set aside.

Ques What do you mean by death set aside?

CAC How could God have pleasure in men under death? He is the living God. To think that God could be satisfied to leave men under death shows an entire ignorance of God and of the whole purport of Scripture, which is that man must be for God. How could he be for God when under death? What good are the promises and everything which God has committed Himself to for four thousand years if man is under death? What is the good of making promises to creatures who would never see them fulfilled? They simply had never taken

account of the whole spiritual bearing of Scripture from the start; they wanted chapter and verse, as they always do when they are wrong. The divine judgment was on the man after the flesh, and that man is under death, but God suggests the principle all through the Old Testament that His thought was to relieve man of death. All the sacrifices spoke of that. If a man finds a place of forgiveness and acceptance with God, it is on the ground of death; that is an intimation to all those of spiritual discernment that God intended to relieve man of death, and that involved resurrection. What God had in view was a spiritual order, and it is remarkable that the Lord brings in the angels in order to give the full light of it.

Ques I suppose they knew something of the spiritual beings in the Old Testament economy?

CAC Yes, they knew there were those who were made spirits — He "maketh his angels spirits" — they were heavenly beings, and spiritual beings, and holy beings, and the Lord says that for the pleasure of God there must be a race morally like that. When you come to the full truth you find a Man going up above all angels: "the last Adam a quickening spirit", and "the second man out of heaven", 1 Corinthians 15: 45, 47. But the Lord takes the Jews up on the ground of the knowledge they had of a spiritual and heavenly order; and He says, God will put His raised saints in that kind of order to be like the angels. The Lord suggests in that a spiritual order, all the fruit of God's election, for the angels are elect. The angels are a wonderful family; they are sons; they are elect sons; they are holy; they are intelligent; they do not die; they are marked by obedience, strength and sympathy; they are able to appreciate redemption; they are able to understand the worthiness of the Lamb. What a wonderful company of sons the blessed God has in the angel family, what a delight to God to have a company of unfallen sons who are elect! They are maintained in integrity in their first estate by the mighty power of God. The thought of God is to put man into a position which corresponds with the angels, and if there was nothing more that would be enough to set us up — to be equal to angels! The Lord says, "are as angels". We have not considered enough what the angels are. The Lord suggests it to us for contemplation when He brings the angels before us in this connection. They are a deathless order of intelligent and holy beings, who are maintaining the blessed God's original thought by His own power. There is no possibility of defeat; they answer intelligently to the thoughts of God, and appreciate the ways of God which are outside their own experience. What a wonderful family they are! One likes to think of them.

Rem It would be well for us to think over their characteristics.

CAC Yes, and the Lord would lead us that way in the apprehension of that new order which is for the pleasure of God in resurrection. If the Lord leads us by way of the angels it is not fanciful.

Rem In Hebrews 2 it says, "he does not indeed take hold of angels ... but he takes hold of the seed of Abraham". It shows there is a higher order.

CAC Yes, the whole point of Hebrews 1 is that the Messiah has come into manhood, and inherits a name greater than that of the angels.

Rem Angels minister to the heirs of salvation.

CAC Yes, they are seen then as serving spirits; they are not looked at in that scripture as sons but as servants. It gives a wonderful idea of the assembly and of all the heavenly families, to see that all those who are raised are sons. The Lord says in Luke 20, "they ... are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection". That applies to all the Old Testament saints, all the raised family are raised for heaven, not earth; and they are raised to be in the position of sons, to have the intelligent sympathy of sons with God, so that there may be pleasure for God. God called Israel to sonship, but all failed in Israel, and must fail in the man who is under death, but the power of God comes in and introduces an entirely new order, and brings into effect every purpose of His love. All who are spiritually conversant with the Old Testament ought to understand that God is going to have delight in man.

Rem I suppose it is worked out in 1 Corinthians where Christ is spoken of as the wisdom and power of God. The wisdom of God has displaced in the cross that element of corruption connected with the first Adam condition, and a new order of things is coming in. The apostle says, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified". The Spirit of God comes in on that line, and anyone accepting the cross gets the help of the Spirit at once. The temple is connected with the pleasure of God.

CAC Yes, we learn the power of God in 1 Corinthians; it is like the firmament of His power. We get the expansion of His power by the saints being set before Him in resurrection; we shall bear the image of the heavenly One. What a firmament of power to be introduced into spiritually now in order that the wine-vat might be full! The firmament is the saints: every star and constellation sets forth the wonderful way in which God will bring out His glory in the effectuation of His purposes in the saints. It is all done in the power of resurrection.

It is beautiful to see the calmness of divine wisdom with which the Lord deals with the Sadducees. The working of the power of evil must bring out divine resources to meet it; God being what He is, it is a necessity. All through the

Old Testament every phase of the power of evil was met at its appearance with the power of God. I suppose the Lord connects all this with the promises when He refers to what God said to Moses "... I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living". If the Sadducees had thought for a moment, what a foolish thing it would have been for God to make promises for four thousand years and for faith to go on and suffer and triumph for four thousand years in the light of the promises, if the saints were never to see or touch one of them! It is the most absurd thing to think of, that faith should suffer and triumph in vain. If there was no resurrection, then God had promised in vain, the whole thing would be worthless, and the Scriptures worthless. The Lord would instruct us to read the Scriptures spiritually, and have ability to read them in the light of what God is, so that we might learn God and what He has before Him for His pleasure. If we see that, we are bound to be affected by it.

Rem In Hebrews 11 we see that God gave the light of what He was, and Abraham accepted that God was able to raise from the dead.

CAC Yes, and Adam, in calling his wife Eve, calls her 'life'. What a powerful sense he had of what God was, for though death had come in he could call his wife the mother of all living: there must be a generation of living persons for God.

Rem Many christians do not get the benefit of the Spirit because they are working on wrong lines. If I am on the line of self-improvement and my own efforts, the Spirit of God will never help me. If on the other hand I am in the light of the cross and the setting aside of the first man, Christ becomes the object before my heart, and then I get the support of the Spirit.

CAC Yes, because the Spirit must come to the support of every divine thought, so that when we are on that line we get His support. How could He support us on any other line?

Ques Does wisdom come in that way?

CAC Yes, in learning the activities of God in the scene of death we begin to love Him. I think the enquiry of the scribe was a very intelligent one, and it gave the Lord great pleasure to be asked which was the first commandment.

Ques The Lord brings in the principle of resurrection to indicate that there was to be fruit for God on that line?

CAC Yes, "From me is thy fruit found", Hosea 14: 8. In the widow we see one entirely free from self-consideration; there was only consideration for God, not a moment's for herself. She must have been in the light of the blessedness of

God to be so absolutely free from every thought of self-consideration. What beautiful fruit there must have been! The Lord sets forth that to love God with the whole heart,

soul, strength and mind is the great commandment; it is the one thing God is set for, and He makes it clear that He will get it. He has it in one Man, and the fact that He has it in one Man secures that He will have it in millions.

Rem The widow did not say she loved the Lord her God, but she acted on it.

CAC Yes, what people say does not count for a minute. These people at the beginning of the passage said beautiful things of the Lord, and true things, but they were all mocking.

Ques Why does the incident of the widow come in in this section?

CAC I thought that the moment we get the light of Christ's present position in exaltation everything is assured. The exaltation of Christ is come. He is above everyone; He has the place of supremacy, and there is no-one above Him; and that assures that everything will bend under Him. If you were lifted out of this room and taken to heaven, the one fact of importance to you would be that Christ is universally supreme up there. If you were to come back to this earth you would say, 'I shall carry out on earth what they do in heaven'. That is the kingdom; everything flows from that as being under Christ as supreme.

It would appear that the Lord was taking occasion to bring out the character of what had abiding value for God as a kind of contrast with the external system which He speaks of in the next chapter, "Seest thou these great buildings? not a stone shall be left upon a stone, which shall not be thrown down". There seems to be a marked contrast suggested between the outward system which was going to be thrown down, and those conditions in which God would secure man for His own pleasure, and to answer to the thoughts of His own heart.

Ques What are the conditions?

CAC The Lord intimated that God had been pleased to identify Himself and connect His name with them. The fact that God has done that involves resurrection: that is, in a world where sin has been and death has come in as a consequence of sin, man could only be for God on the ground of resurrection. God proposes to relieve man of death, and to deal with all that which had brought in death, so that God may have man in the power of affection.

I think this scribe was an intelligent man; he was able to perceive the wisdom with which the Lord had answered the Sadducees, and he was able to

perceive what was involved in this, and if God was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, if God had definitely connected His name with men, it was not possible that man could be left under sin and death. They must be brought back to God, and in a world under sin and death, that could only be in the power of resurrection. The scribe had been exercised as to what was important in the mind of God in reference to man, as to what had the first place in the thoughts of God in regard to man. God has come in in redemption to secure a people for Himself. It was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who spoke to Moses. The whole book of Exodus shows us that God had come in in grace and power and in the actings of His own love by way of redemption and deliverance in order that He might have men for Himself. The great objective of the gospel is that God is seeking man's love. God begins by covering man's transgressions: there is a proverb which says, "He that covereth transgression seeketh love", Proverbs 17: 9. God is seeking love, we see that in the first commandment. All through the Old Testament we find God acting in love. Moses tells the children of Israel that it was not because they were great or mighty that Jehovah chose them, but because He loved them. Then we have, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him", Hosea 11: 1. He loved the people.

Ques Was the scribe one of wisdom's children?

CAC Yes, I should think he was. God has come out to us in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ: He has shown there His way of relieving us of death and of all that brought in death. What an infinite expenditure divine love has made! We often sing, 'O blessed Lord, what hast Thou done?' We should never forget that God has not reached His objective with any one of us until we love Him with all our hearts; we do not stand in the proper gain of the gospel until we do.

Then the Lord brings on the scene a practical illustration of one who put her all into the treasury; and there is not one of us here tonight who cannot do that. The Holy Spirit has come in in order that there might be a divine spring, because redemption and God's delivering power, all His promises and His thoughts for man, are set up in a risen Christ. All this was in order that the Spirit might be given to men so that there might be a divine spring of love in the heart of man. Those who do not love Christ in christianity come under a curse, just as they did under the law if they did not love God. "If any one love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema", 1 Corinthians 16: 22. It is a moral necessity that the creature who does not love is under a moral curse. The designation which Paul uses in describing the saints is that they love God "those who love God, ... called according to purpose", Romans 8: 28. It is very

affecting. It touches one to think that the blessed God should care for our love; it is the first thing in His thoughts. It is the blessed result of the service of Christ to bring to pass in the saints what was so perfectly and fully expressed in Himself. We see it exemplified in Him; He loved God with all His heart, with all His soul, understanding, and strength, and His neighbour as Himself. It was all there in Christ. It is a great thing when we begin to love Him in that character. The Lord Jesus becomes the Object of affection because we find in Him everything that we lack in ourselves.

There is something here that cannot be thrown down. In the next chapter we see this wonderful building and great stones, a great external system which makes a show in the world, but it is all coming down; "Not a stone shall be left upon a stone, which shall not be thrown down". But the Lord is building up a structure that is not coming down and it is built up in the power of resurrection and the affections of the saints. If we love God, will that come down? No, never! The wonderful thing is that what was true in Christ is now worked out in the saints on the basis of resurrection. It is not building on what man was in the flesh; that man has come under death.

I think practically this brings about unity among the saints and delivers from every form of idolatry. "To us there is one God, the Father, of whom all things, and *we* for him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and *we* by him", 1 Corinthians 8: 6. That chapter speaks of the importance of love. "We all have knowledge", the apostle says contemptuously; that is not what counts. "But if any one love God, *he* is known of him". That is what attracts God's attention, that a person loves Him. Is not that an attractive proposal that God proposes? It is the end He has in view in His ways with man in all His blessed workings by the Lord Jesus Christ; it is what the Lord Jesus can bring to pass in us.

These are just the principles that rule in the kingdom of God. The Lord at the end of this chapter takes up a deliberate position. He sits down over against the treasury. We read of Him looking round, walking in the temple, teaching in the temple; but here He sits down. He takes up an abiding place to see how people cast into the treasury. In what way, and in what degree are we committed to the interests of God? The Lord is sitting there still; He has never ceased to have that position, and He takes account of how we are committed to the interests of God.

We see here the inward and spiritual contrasted with what is external. It is a great thing for us to understand the contrast. We are just at the end; in the same kind of position as at that moment. It was just at the end of what had been a divine profession, but it had become fruitless for God. We are now at

the end of what was originally set up for God, but it has become a great system of which every stone will be thrown down. Now the great thing is for us to get to what is inward and spiritual and what has value for God; nothing has value for God but what flows out of the affections. All the external system will be swept away, but everything built up in the power of holy affections and appreciation of Christ will abide; all is perfectly set up in Christ. The moment I appreciate Christ it begins to be built up in my soul, and that is an imperishable structure which will not be thrown down.

It is quite possible that the whole heart should be characterised by love to God. The heart represents the purpose, and I should like to think that it was the definite purpose of every heart here to be for God — "we for him" — because we see that of Him are all things. Every single thing we enjoy, that there is any true value in, is of God: nothing else is of Him. Everything that gives us happiness and forms the subject of our fellowship is of God, and in result it becomes the purpose of our heart to be for God.

Then all the desires go that way, "with all thy soul". Desires are connected with the soul — we desire to be for God in the sense of the wonderful love of God, the way He has moved because He wanted our affections. There was such an expenditure. God has come to seek our love and to get it.

"All thy understanding". God has made known all that was in His mind connected with man; that is, you do not need to go outside the blessed things of God to find something for your mind. The mind can be wholly taken up with what is of God, with every part of His precious truth. It is possible for all the understanding to be taken up in a blessed and satisfying way with that which God has communicated to us.

Rem The mind was that which was alienated from God.

CAC Yes, man had a mind void of moral discernment. "The kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared" (Titus 3: 4), and He has saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. God has brought about an entire renovation. The widow, as part of the external system was of no value. There were rich people who contributed to the external system and the Lord knew how to value everything rightly, but here was a woman who had no place in all that. Her two mites were no support to the external system, but the point is she put her all into the interests of God, and therefore what she contributed was of more value in the Lord's estimation than the great gifts the others had contributed. What the Lord is concerned about is that our all should be put into the interests of God; the question for all of us is, Are we putting our all in and not having any side lines?

"With all your strength". Whatever abilities you have are entirely consecrated to God, absolutely dedicated to God's interests. You have the thought that there is that down here which is of God and for God, and whatever abilities one has are devoted to God without reserve. We ought to consider these things; what affords pleasure to the blessed God is that we should be wholly for Him. It is a beautiful word, "*we for him*". That is the God we have before us, the God of whom are all things and we for Him; every saint can say that. If that is the divine intent I want to pursue it. It is "of whom are all things"; everything has flowed out from God. There is nothing whatever about me that I have not received from God except sin and death. We were all under sin and death, and anything I have of value comes from God and from the Lord Jesus Christ, and is known by the Spirit in our hearts.

The first and second commandment go together, because if you are wholly for God you love your neighbour as yourself; that is, everything you possess you want your neighbour to have too. You are not selfish — how could you be, for instance, about the forgiveness of sins? You want your neighbour to have it too, and so with every spiritual blessing. That is the spring of all service in the house of God; whatever you have, you have no thought of keeping it to yourself. Whatever you have for your own heart, you want your neighbour to have as far as your ability lies by your prayers and service. You love him as yourself, and want him to have what you have and more. You would be delighted that your neighbour should have all you have, and delighted if you found he had more; it would give you real joy. What a happiness it is to the saints to recognise movement and growth and spiritual power in a brother or sister! What a thrill of joy it gives to see spiritual prosperity in a fellow-saint! That is loving your neighbour as yourself. It is something new and divine and it belongs to the system that will never be overthrown.

Ques Is the neighbour a practical test?

CAC Yes, the neighbour tests us. John puts things in that way; it is all very well to talk about loving God, but what about your brother? Whatever you have spiritually in relation to God can have not the smallest element of selfishness about it; you are concerned that your neighbour should have it and share it. It is a real spring of unjealous and unselfish joy to see the prosperity of a saint, to see a man getting on better than oneself. It may produce exercise and lead to self-judgment, but it is a source of joy; and you can go to God and thank Him when you see your brother prospering better than yourself.

Ques What is the force of the Lord saying, "not far from the kingdom of God"?

CAC I think the Lord discerned the spirit of moral understanding; and, if we want to understand the system that cannot be overthrown, we must learn to take account of things morally and according to God, and to recognise the truth of the present position. The Lord brings in the thought of His sitting at the right hand of God; that is an important element in connection with it. Christ is rejected here, and is sitting at the right hand of God, and you are conscious you are in the place where His enemies are; and now an interval has come in, filled up by the presence of the Spirit here — Christ is known at the right hand of God; the system which is being built up by Him can never be overthrown. There is a circle here where love is found in activity; there is the knowledge of God in love and of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the activities that go on in that circle are for everyone to participate in. There is no idea of things being put into a narrower limit than that, and it comes about by understanding what is the thought of God.

The widow spirit indicates a character of things that will be available in the greatest possible outward weakness; she was a true Philadelphian. You may say, I have got so little, but this is specially encouraging for those who feel their measure is small. You can put it all in; it is open to every one of us to be wholeheartedly for the present interests of God. It is not having great gifts. Many in the outward order of things may have a great place and splendid gifts, but that has not the value attaching to the wholehearted affection that would put everything in. That is the point. The widow cast in all her living — no reserves, no side-lines. One has come across brothers and sisters who you feel have put in all; their all is committed to the interests of God. They are always responsive and sympathetic, and always interested in any interests of God and ready to further them in every possible way. They may be quite simple, with no outward place in the assembly, but they are ready to give to the interests of God. Those are the persons of value, and the system characterised by that kind of thing can never be thrown down.

Rem It is an exercise as to how one's thoughts and time are engaged.

CAC Yes, it brings in everything, your purpose, your desire, your intelligence, every ability you have, and your strength, what is it for? The great privilege is that they should be all for God's interests here. We are here in a peculiar moment, the moment of Christ being at the right hand of God and His enemies here, and we have the unspeakable privilege of being wholly for the interests of God, and for those who love Him. You may say we are feeble, and I suppose every one of us would say how feeble we are, but is this the line we are on? It is the only line that gives pleasure to God.

Rem Paul said, "for me to live is Christ", Philippians 1: 21.

CAC Yes, he put all into the treasury; everything he had was unselfishly used for the benefit of the saints. Whatever we have has to be used, and we shall lose the joy of it if we do not use it for the benefit of the saints. You cannot keep your blessings to yourself and retain the joy of them. You can only retain your joy by loving your neighbour as yourself, and that involves cost, because, if you want persons to be brought into the enjoyment of things, it involves labour and suffering.

The scribes were all for the eye of man, long robes and prominent seats, all for man. The great thing is to see that the Lord is sitting over the treasury, and what is done is for the eye of the Lord. We see in the verses previous to this that along with religious pretension there may be great moral depravity. Someone said the other day that he thought he was more affected by the brethren than by the Lord. A person might do certain things that he would not do if the brethren were there; but we should have the sense that the Lord is sitting over against the treasury, taking up this calm deliberate position, and taking account of how much every one of us is committed to the interests of God. The Lord is not deceived by what seems large pretensions, He knows the exact amount of affection in which everything is done, and what is not done in love has no value in His eyes.

MARK 13

Mark 13

CAC This chapter indicates to us the importance of a spiritual outlook. The disciples were occupied with stones and buildings, but the Lord's outlook had been on what was there spiritually for God. One might feel sure that the stones and buildings were of very small interest to the Lord, but the heart of the widow was of immense interest to Him; there was a character of things there which it would be impossible to throw down. Affectionate movements of heart in reference to the interests of God must be of profound interest to the Lord. The gifts cast into the treasury were ostensibly for the support of the house, and of the service connected with it. The treasury represents divine interests such as could be ministered to.

Ques It was as the Lord *went out of the temple* that the disciples called attention to the buildings. Is there any importance in that?

CAC Yes, it was an order of things which the Lord was leaving. We are in the presence of an order of things which the Lord is, as it were, leaving at the present moment: He speaks of Laodicea being spued out of His mouth. There is a great system of things which strikingly corresponds with the temple as it stood in that day. While it had the responsibility of the house and was judged as not having the character of the house, yet it was really a human imitation. This particular temple was built by Herod, and we know that Herod never had it patterned by the Spirit or had the hand of God upon him; so it was an imitation of what had been originally set up as having the divine character. It was there ostensibly as God's house, and the Lord takes things on the ground of their profession. We find at the present time that we have a great and imposing structure. The outward profession of christianity at the present time is very imposing in the eyes of men, and sometimes in the eyes of disciples, but it is a material imitation of what was originally set up in spiritual power. When you test things by the divine standard, the imitation always fails, and therefore the Lord must go out; there could only be a place for the Father and Son in spiritual affections. Great stones have no value; the tendency is to put them in the place of the widow's two mites.

The time in which the Lord was here is very similar to the time we are in. He was here in the last days of a profession which was originally of God, but it had come to such a state that there was nothing for God there; the temple itself was only a human imitation and exaggeration of the divine thought. Today we have an imitation and exaggeration outwardly. The Lord leads His disciples to a point from which they can have a spiritual outlook on everything.

He goes and sits down on the mount of Olives opposite the temple and looks, but He has it in view from a heavenly and spiritual point of view. That is the place He would lead us to so that we might not be under the influence of great stones and buildings, but under the influence of what is heavenly and spiritual. I think the widow had a spiritual view of the house. It was not to her a mere structure of stones and buildings, but she connected it in her affections with the God whose house it was, so her outlook of the house and the treasury was a spiritual one, and she could be in absolute devotion to Him. There is great interest in the Lord going to the mount of Olives and sitting down there with His disciples; it is the only spot from which you can get a spiritual outlook.

Revelation 2 and 3 answer to the Lord looking round and walking about in the temple. In Revelation 1 He is walking in the midst of the candlesticks, but when we come to chapter 4 He is saying, "Come up here". He is calling us up to a heavenly standpoint so as to look down from a heavenly point of view on all the things that are about to take place on earth. It is very much like this chapter; you are brought to a heavenly and spiritual outlook.

Rem The Lord is going out here.

CAC Yes, that is the first thing to see. It is a system of things He is leaving because it is not of God or for God, and He leaves it finally. This is His final exit from the temple. The Lord does not change the present character of the profession. It is our privilege to be in intelligent sympathy with Him, and our attitude towards the various things in the assembly should be determined by His. Whatever attitude He takes up is safe for us to take up.

Ques Is that the thought of sitting on the mount of Olives?

CAC Yes. What strikes one is that the Lord sits down restfully in a spot which speaks of what is spiritual and heavenly, that spot which was home to Him. When everyone went to his own home He went to the mount of Olives; it was home to Him. We can understand how the spiritual and heavenly were home to the Lord. As to this world He had not where to lay His head, but His home was in that region of the spiritual and heavenly. He sits down there and takes up a deliberate position, just as He had sat down over against the treasury. It seems to intimate an abiding place which He takes.

Ques Why is it "opposite the temple"?

CAC What is in view is that we might have a divine estimate of all that appears to be for God in this world but that is pretentious. We shall not be in concert with the Lord if we have not the same standpoint and spiritual vision.

Ques Why are the four disciples connected here?

CAC I do not know, unless it is that this is a kind of enquiry not reserved for those who are conspicuous. An inconspicuous man like Andrew can have part in it.

Ques Why was He in the temple in the day and going out to the mount of Olives at night?

CAC I suppose His public testimony was one thing; it was a testimony rendered in the midst of all the departure and corruption, but His own personal resort was the mount of Olives. I think the night would intimate the time of retirement in contrast to the twelve hours of the day.

One would desire to take a spiritual view of everything we have to say to, and to value things according to the spiritual affections which are active in them.

Ques Why do things take a private character on the mount of Olives?

CAC That is very interesting. They "asked him privately".

We miss a great deal by not asking the Lord privately. If we want to know things we are apt to ask the brethren. This is a private enquiry, not exactly of assembly character. If we were more familiar with the Lord and more confiding, we should ask questions and get them answered.

Ques Does four suggest remnant character?

CAC It suggests individual exercise. Andrew was not a conspicuous man in the apostolic band. The other three were pillars, but Andrew was not, and one feels happy that one can come in as Andrew if not as Peter, James and John.

They seem to have accepted that not one stone should be left on another, and now they ask the Lord privately to tell them more about it. It is a good thing to ask the Lord about things. If we did, when there was a scripture we did not understand, I am sure the Lord would have the greatest pleasure in answering private enquiries. The Lord does not abridge His answers if there is a spirit of genuine enquiry.

This chapter shows typically that His house is not to be dislodged until He comes back. This is full of cheer. However many deceivers and disturbers there may be, His house is not to be dislodged, and the gospel is going on, too. The house will stand, and the gospel testimony will not be obstructed or stopped by any conditions here. It is very beautiful to see that in the midst of all these conditions we get the assurance that the evangelical work is going out to all nations. It will not stop when the church goes; it is going right on until the Lord comes back. And the house is going on, too; the occupants will be

changed, but the house will go right on until the Lord comes back. This chapter shows us that the saints of the assembly will not be found in the tribulation. All this chapter is most comforting; it shows how under the worst conditions the gospel is going on and the house will be preserved, and the servants discharge their proper responsibility right on to the end. We get a heavenly and spiritual outlook, and when we hear of wars and rumours of wars we shall not be disturbed.

It is a time of false prophets and false Christs, and signs and wonders and deceivers; we get a good deal of that now. Many profess to have signs and wonders; it is on the line of antichrist. I think Babylon is more the glory of the world, the profession clothed with the glory of the world. You can see that plainly, but when you come to signs and wonders it is a question of spiritual wickedness which imitates what is of God, more on the line of antichrist, which definitely takes the place of Christ, and appears to have supernatural credentials. It is like people who tell you they have communication with the unseen world and work miracles: there is much of it about. That is what will culminate in antichrist; all the apparatus is being got ready for the grand display, and people are being habituated to things which will constitute the great power of evil in the coming day. The moral instruction of this chapter is of the last importance. The Lord says, "They shall deliver you up to sanhedrims and to synagogues: ye shall be beaten and brought before rulers and kings for my sake". If the features of Christ are seen, the natural man does not love them. It is a great thing to be persecuted because one is meek and a mourner; because one hungers and thirsts after righteousness; because one is merciful and pure in heart. It is a great divine favour to be persecuted because one has those characteristics. One does not look for compensation here; we are to look for it in the place where He got His compensation. There is a present heavenly reward — we do not know much about it — if we came out more in the features of Christ, we might know it.

The thing is not to be deceived, to recognise the moral character of people who bring you something which appears to be fresh. Paul presents that as a safeguard of truth in 2 Timothy when all kinds of questions as to evil were coming in. He says, "knowing of whom thou hast learned". 'You know what kind of man I am'. "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience". That is the kind of man that will not deceive you. In 2 Corinthians the apostle develops very largely his sufferings, and the intense and unceasing discipline he went through; he brings all that out as credentials of ministry.

Rem We do not get much of this kind of thing now.

CAC No doubt, but the principle is helpful and encouraging if we find ourselves in the smallest measure on that line; it is a great comfort then to fall back on the Spirit. It is a wonderful thing to be so identified with the Lord's name that we are suitably representing Him. That is the idea, that there should be people so representing Christ that they can be vessels for the Holy Spirit to speak through; it is not their speaking but the Holy Spirit. Antichrist comes in his own name and pretends to be Christ; he has horns like a lamb, but listen to his voice! He speaks like a dragon. One would like to be exercised as to the vessels the Holy Spirit can speak through, and as to the suitable moral formation.

This applies particularly to when they were brought up publicly, but the principle of it is very important, for when you get some actual suffering you can apply the principle. I believe this character of things is always going on and will do so: if not in this island it goes on in China, Turkey and other places all the time.

Ques Would you say a little more about the Holy Spirit speaking through suited vessels?

CAC If we see the Holy Spirit acting in this way it encourages one to look for this kind of action, and that brings us into exercise. Am I the sort of person the Holy Spirit can select as a vessel to speak through? It raises the question of my whole moral condition. I do not know any other way of appearing in public but as identified with the name of Christ and as a vessel of the power of the Spirit. When a person challenges you, how easy it is to answer with human argument. I know what it is to do that and have felt sorry after. If one had been more dependent, there might have been an opportunity for the Spirit of God to give a direct thrust through heart and conscience which would never have been forgotten. Look how the Holy Spirit spoke through Stephen. All at once without premeditation he can go in an orderly and perfect way through the whole history of the ways of God with His people. He does not drop a stitch; every link in the chain is perfect. There is an example of a man speaking in the power of the Spirit of God. That is the sort of speaking that never makes any mistake; it is on the line of His name and the speaking and power of the Holy Spirit.

It is a question of enduring. If we get on to the line of Christ and the Spirit, then we are content to endure; we may have to wait for salvation but it will surely come. "He that endures to the end shall be saved". At the end there is complete deliverance from all these opposing adversaries.

Ques Is preaching to go on through suffering?

CAC It says here that the gospel is to be preached to all the nations. That does not mean only in all the meeting-rooms. I think, personally, that it is a great pity there is not more desire to carry the gospel outside, and look for open doors outside. It is very nice to preach in rooms, but it does not fulfil the commission of the Lord to all nations. Paul's exercise was to get among people who had not heard Christ's name. I think the spirit of an evangelist would lead us out in our measure to speak a word or give a book. The gospel is to go out to all creation; we have to look at men, not as fallen sinners, but as part of God's creation, and bring them the good news because of the infinite worth and value attaching to them as God's creation. Even when a man blasphemes, he is part of God's creation, and the gospel goes to him in all the wonderful character of his being part of God's creation. Ultimately the creature itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Wherever there is a created man, woman or child, we think of them in that way. I have known people who have gone to China or India, and who have never knocked at every door in their own street at home. We may not be able to go abroad, but we may go to the doors in our street.

Ques Does the present church period come in in this chapter?

CAC I should think the general principle would apply. It is the Lord giving private instruction in view of the suitable behaviour of His servants right on to the end. The spirit and conduct of the servants are very much before the Lord, and that which is suitable in the Lord's servants in the time of His absence would have an important bearing on us at the present time, though we might not actually be in the circumstances of the service.

Ques Does not the last verse of the chapter show to whom it is addressed? "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch".

CAC Yes. It brings in a principle of wide application, and would intimate that the service of the house is to be carried on until He comes back.

We see here certain principles. There are great stones and great buildings all coming down, and the Lord sets us where we can have a spiritual outlook on all that great system of profession which is coming down. It is a question here of Christ and His name, the Holy Spirit speaking, and the gospel continuing in spite of religious opposition and persecution. These are all features which mark the present day.

Ques Would you say the abomination of desolation is in view?

CAC Yes, it is to be spiritually discerned; we see it coming in in men being lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Rem One can see so plainly the movement towards apostasy and idolatry, God not having His place in man's heart.

CAC Yes, the right conduct for us would be to flee to the mountains. I suppose the prophetic word is highly important as giving light amidst the obscurity; it gives indications as to how to behave, and light in the midst of darkness. The day-dawn and day-star bring in the light of the coming day, but we need to understand what is going on in obscurity. The prophetic word gives light in regard to conditions of obscurity. It is blessed to have the light of the coming day, the day-dawn and the morning-star, the light of the future brought into the present, but there is a system of obscurity, and the prophetic word illuminates it. Peter says, Ye do well to take heed to it; it is all connected with Christ. We must not undervalue the importance of it. At the present time we owe much to the fact that saints have taken heed to the prophetic word; it has had a wonderful effect in disentangling us. I think the abomination of desolation, "that which desolates", is the man who is offensive to God being in prominence in the sphere of holy things. The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus, and that intimates that we are not to get occupied with details and minute prophetic facts, but to get the whole scope of things; the spirit of it all is the testimony of Jesus. He is the Man according to God's pleasure; the abomination of desolation is just the opposite kind of man. We can see all the indications of the coming apostasy.

Rem How easily it comes into our own hearts!

CAC Yes, we have to watch lest any element of that kind gets into the house. The command of the porter was to watch; that is the necessity of the door-keeper. There are certain elements which are an abomination and a desolation they desolate what is spiritual and proper to the house of God. We have to watch that such elements do not get in. While a man slept an enemy sowed tares.

Ques What was your thought about fleeing to the mountains?

CAC It is rather suggestive that you do not attempt to deal with anything that is apostate. Flight is the only thing.

Ques Do you think we might look at Judaea as ordered religion without power, the truth held rightly but no heavenly power? The Lord is stirring our hearts now that we may find blessing in connection with what is elevated and heavenly.

CAC Yes. Truth without power leads rapidly in the direction of a form of piety, but denying its power.

Ques Is this in the christian profession?

CAC Yes. We see that the man of sin will come out in his true colours presently, and in the midst of the week there will be some definite manifestation of his character. The elements of that kind of thing are all working today, and are to be spiritually discerned. If we consider the prophetic word we shall see the bearing of it. It is very simple to get prophetic facts, but the moral principle that underlies the facts is the spirit of prophecy.

Rem We get the great tribulation spoken of here. I suppose we do not get the church.

CAC We know as a matter of fact that the church will not be here when this final stage of things is reached, but the great thing is to see the drift of things.

Ques Is the hope of the church not simply the rapture, but the coming of the Lord?

CAC Quite so. If we thought more of the coming of the Lord, it would have a great effect on us. When we come to prophetic scriptures — and this is one of them — it is very important that we should take it in its universal setting, and that we should see that the teaching is part of the mind of the Spirit. No prophetic scripture is of private interpretation; we cannot limit it to the circumstances it deals with, because moral principles are brought in. If the Holy Spirit speaks, He takes in a very wide view, and the greatest moral principles come in in the prophetic word. The danger is getting occupied with prophetic details and leaving out moral principles.

Rem Watching seems to be enjoined in connection with it all.

CAC The Lord gives all this instruction privately, and it seems to lead up to the faithful discharge of every authorised responsibility in the house, and the house should be pervaded by the spirit of watchfulness. The bondmen are seen in unity; that is to characterise levitical service. Levi means united, and,

while service is of course individual, it is to be taken up under authority. There is a unity about all true service, and each servant should remember he belongs to a unity. It is "to each his work", but they are all to work together.

"Pray that it may not be in winter time"; what a touching consideration on the Lord's part for the external difficulties. He cuts short the tribulation; that is very suggestive. It clearly indicates the ability of the Lord to set limits to times of great pressure. He even cuts short the days so that the prophetic time may not actually run its full length. While the public ways of God are running their course there is tender consideration blended with them which will not suffer you to be tried more than you are able to bear.

Ques How do you take verse 23, "do *ye* take heed"?

CAC It is always important right on until the Lord comes. This precious instruction of the Lord is to be taken heed to, and the house will be here when He comes back. It is the same house. The staff of servants will be changed suddenly in one moment, but it is the same house.

Ques Does responsibility rest with us now?

CAC Yes, we cannot get rid of the fact that we are set here in responsibility to hold things until the Lord comes, and we break bread until He comes. His coming does not mean the rapture, it is holding things here until the Christ comes back to the earth.

Ques What would you say as to His giving His bondman the authority?

CAC I suppose there is such a thing as divinely given power that none can refute. The house seems to be a sphere where the authority of the Master invests the servants; it supposes that the bondmen are set to carry out His pleasure.

Ques What is your thought as to the doorkeeper?

CAC I think he is to be ready to open the door when the Master comes; and also to mount guard and see that no one comes in who will be a desolator. I think it refers to responsible service. There was a special responsibility about the door; all sources of weakness and defection have got in through unwatchfulness at the door. I think we are apt to be too lax; there should be some more definite and positive evidence attaching to people who are received. Things were more marked in church history — "of the rest durst no man join them", Acts 5: 13.

Ques Does receiving one another allude to the breaking of bread?

CAC "Receive ye one another" (Romans 15: 7) means in your affections and as governed by holiness. You see what is of Christ there and you receive that unquestioningly. The principle applies because it is a question of what you can receive to the glory of God. You receive such a person because that person carries the features of Christ. If people are received to break bread, the reception should be on that ground.

MARK 14

Mark 14

CAC This incident of the woman shows that the gospel is to have its answer, and I think that would be the desire of every heart that had been affected by the gospel. There was the ability of affection here to perceive in the Lord that which commanded it in contrast to the whole character of things here, because it is not a resurrection scene here, as it is in John 12.

The house of Simon the leper seems to suggest a scene that had been marked by uncleanness, but there was a heart there that had become impressed and commanded by the holy purity and perfection that she had considered in Him. This scene only served as a background to bring out the wonderful purity of that holy service which had been rendered so delightfully to God, and the holy affections that could appreciate it. I think the woman had considered things; her affections had been active in considering, and she realised in her affections that there was that in Him that could not have any place in this polluted scene. He must disappear from this world, so it says, "She has beforehand anointed my body for the burial". What a blessed thing it is when a heart gets a sense of the preciousness of Christ, and the contrast in Him in this scene, so that there could be no place for Him here. It is not a question of doctrine, or being enlightened in terms, but the Lord would have us feel intensely in fervent affection that there could not possibly be a place for Him here. In her affection I think the woman had touched that; love makes us have quickened affections, and the Lord says, "She hath done what she could". It would be good for us all if our affections outran our intelligence; what we have to mourn over is that we know so much and yet there is so little movement in our affections. We all know a great deal more than this woman, but how far are we moved so that there should be an unrestrained outpouring on Him? She breaks the flask; there is no retention of the vessel to be ever used for any other; it is an act never to be reconsidered. We might all covet to get a name that way. This woman gets a wonderful name, what a renown she gets! It was an act of affection that knew no reserve. I have often thought there is a moral correspondence between the woman breaking the flask and the Lord breaking the bread; it was the same kind of unreserved devotion that would not contemplate the possibility of reconsidering a final act. A committal like that would be delightful to the Lord, and it is open to us all to get that kind of name.

I think we ought to be much affected by the thought that there is only a brief space in which affection for the Lord can be evidenced in the very scene

where He is to be buried, in the place where He is not allowed to have one inch above ground. What an effect this would produce on the hearts of lovers! We consider in our affections His wonderful service — this is the aspect of it in this gospel. When everything in Israel was marked by uncleanness, there was One who passed through it in the holy purity of divine love, and gave Himself in an unmeasured way for the needs of men — that commanded the heart of the woman. The flask is filled with all she had gathered up of Him, and there is no reserve. One cannot think of true devotion making any reserve, so she breaks the flask; it is a final act, she gives herself in affection wholly to Him, and there is no reserve for self.

Ques Will you tell us your thought about the Lord breaking the bread?

CAC I was thinking of it as the expression of unreserved devotion. It was unreserved devotion when the Lord took the bread and broke it; it was an intimation of how He was about to surrender His body — He gave Himself. It was giving His life, His all, giving Himself.

There is nothing more marvellous than that there should be something in you and me that is worthy to be put alongside of the gospel. Nothing could be more touching than to think that He gave Himself for us.

Ques Would it not sober us in our position here in this world to think He must go out because He could not remain, so we could not seek a place here?

CAC Yes, that is the only right way to go out — in affection. This woman reached the full extent of the possibilities. It is a very affecting question for us to ask ourselves. Have we really reached what is possible in the way of devotion, and if not, why not? It is an exercise for us as to why we have come so short of the possibilities. The woman had reached it, she had been brought to it in affection that there was only one Person for her. The widow, also, who gave the two mites had reached the limit of possibilities on the line of devotion. This woman gets a wonderful memorial.

Ques What do you mean about the name?

CAC The Lord says, "Wheresoever these glad tidings may be preached in the whole world, what this woman has done shall be also spoken of for a memorial of her". That is her name, her renown. I think God would put this alongside the gospel to show to any young convert what is possible, what the right effect of the gospel is. There is not only the gospel shown to us, but the effect the gospel has produced. We leave that out sometimes, but we are hardly justified in leaving this woman out; she had a great name. A great many leave her out; that is, they leave out that element, but the Lord says you are not to leave her out. Wheresoever the gospel is preached you are not only

to tell the glad tidings, but the effect the glad tidings are to produce on those who receive them. The two things should always go together; if not, it is like the old proverb, "The legs of the lame are not equal". It is a great thing to see what is the end of the gospel, it is an immense help to the soul. It would save much trouble and exercise if we understood at the outset what the end of the gospel is.

Ques Was it affection that drew the woman to the Lord in Luke 7?

CAC Yes, the Lord says, "She loved much". The woman sets forth the subjective side, and there is nothing that satisfies the Lord on that side but love. The Lord must have the love of those He loves so intensely Himself; He must have response, as the old monk said:

> 'The hart panteth after the waters,
> The dying for life that departs;
> The Lord in His glory for sinners,
> For the love of rebellious hearts'.

It is beautiful to see the gospel and this woman put together. I think Paul's affection was entirely commanded from the outset, so the gospel was identified with him in a way that it never was with anybody else — he can say, "My gospel". He was another vessel identified with the gospel and we can only get that gospel from Paul. That was a glory and a distinction put on Paul. Everyone who gets the gospel of the glory of the blessed God gets it from Paul.

Ques What is the difference between His head being anointed in Matthew and Mark and His feet in John?

CAC The Lord is viewed officially in Matthew and Mark, so it is His head that is anointed; but when you come to what He is personally it is His feet.

When they spoke angrily to her the Lord threw His wing over her and said, "Let her alone". He would not have a movement of affection checked or interfered with.

The Lord is showing a state of heart that would be ready to enter into the thought of His own love, and so be prepared for what comes out in the Supper. The Lord gives a living example of the kind of affection that could respond to Him and take up His thought. When the Lord sits down with the twelve at the supper table the first thing He does is to tell them that one of them would deliver Him up. He raises the question with every one of them; He avoids telling them here who would do it. He leaves it to work in every one of

their hearts, the possibility of one of them delivering Him up. He raises the question of their affection and devotion. The Supper is not worth much apart from affection; it is a festival of love, and nothing else suits it, so the Lord raises the question, "One of you shall deliver me up". They all began to say, "Is it *I*?" It was one of the best moments in the history of the disciples. I think you see in the woman the kind of affection that would gratify the heart of Christ and be able to take things up in true response. The Lord raises the question affectionately with them whether they were true in response to His love, or whether they were prepared to deliver Him up. We do not want to be set on what is great in this world, and we shall not think of it for a moment if we have anointed Him for His burial. It is not the moment for being great in this world: we want something great in relation to Christ; everything gets its measure according to what it is to Christ. What is the value of our coming together if there is not something in it for Christ? The whole question is that there should be something for Him: He says, "Where is *my* guest-chamber"?

I think this exposed Judas. It is exercising to see that the Lord so orders things that what is in our hearts comes out. What was in the woman's heart came out; what was in the heart of Judas came out; and what was in the Lord's heart came out. The disciples took up the exercise, and each said, "Is it I?" For the moment they were affected by what the Lord said, and they thought what a terrible thing it would be if it should be "I". For the moment they were all in true exercise of heart about it, so that every one said, "Is it I?" The Lord puts that on every one of us; it corresponds with 1 Corinthians 11, "Let a man prove himself". No one should think of coming to the Supper in any other spirit than proving himself. The Lord puts it on us to do it. In this gospel the Lord does not say that it was Judas; He leaves it to work its own heart-exercise with every one. He puts it to each one to test himself and prove himself — "Let a man prove himself". The word 'prove' here is the same as used for testing the purity of metals, throwing them into the crucible. The Lord insists that we should each one test ourselves like that; He would say, 'Are you doing what you do in real devotion to Me or not?' Then we see the Lord providing certain conditions suitable to Himself and to His disciples; and as we are found answering to these conditions there is that which is morally for Christ. It was the first day of unleavened bread: that was a great moment in everybody's history. You may depend on it there was not a bit of leaven left in the house where the Lord had His guest-chamber. If affection for the Lord is to be preserved in purity, there must be the exclusion of leaven: all that which gives place to the flesh, that which inflates man and makes him large and important, all that is to be refused — "Put away leaven out of your houses". Then one admires the exercise of the disciples as to the place where the

passover was to be prepared: they realised that any sort of place would not do, and they said "Where?" Some people think you can remember the Lord and answer to Him under any sort of conditions, but that is not possible. This leads on to what is proper to christianity. It is remarkable that the Lord should take the place of having a household. The passover is a household feast, and the Lord calls on the master of the house for what He speaks of as "my guest-chamber"; that is, He takes the place of being Head of the house for the pleasure of God. It is wonderful to recognise that the Lord has a household. The prophet says, "who shall declare his generation?" Outwardly He was a man without a family, which was a terrible thing in Israel, for a man lost his place and inheritance in Israel if he had no family. The prophet said, "who shall declare his generation?" Isaiah 53: 8. Now you find He has a generation; He has children and a household and He is going to eat the passover with them. He has a spiritual generation. The Lord spoke of the disciples several times as His children. They were His generation; they were divinely taught to recognise that He was Head of the house and they took their direction from Him. They gave way to Him and were divinely taught in their affections, and they realised it would not do to go anywhere, so they say, "Where?" It is very important for us to say, "Where?" There were many houses where they had a guest-chamber, but there was only one spot in that city that the Lord indicated.

Ques You connected the guest-chamber with the woman. Would you enlarge a little upon it?

CAC I think what I said was that the woman reserved nothing for herself. That is morally preparatory to reserving for Him. You find the master of the house reserved his guest-chamber for the Teacher, so that the Teacher could send in at the last moment, when the passover was about to be killed, and every corner was crowded out in Jerusalem — He could send in and find it all reserved for Him, everything provided that was suitable to the occasion and that corresponded with all that He had commanded as the Teacher. It is beautiful that He had a secret disciple like that, and could bring him out to view at the last moment. The Lord indicates the conditions; they were to go and look for a man with a pitcher of water; that is, there is a man who has been to the spring and come back with a fresh supply of what is purifying and refreshing. It is a great thing to look out for where that man finds access, and you may depend on it that is where there is access for the Lord. I should like to look for a spot like that where there is free access for all spiritual ministry that is purifying and refreshing. Where in christendom is there any access for the man with a pitcher of water? Where is there scope for a purely spiritual ministry that would cleanse away every element of what is worldly and

earthly? You cannot find it in the great profession round about; there is no access for it. If that kind of ministry were let in, it would bring the whole thing down; it could not be admitted into the great profession because it would destroy it. If you find a place where there is access and liberty for spiritual ministry, you may depend on it there is access there for the Lord and for the disciples. The guest-chamber is there; there is a place for Him. If you let in the pitcher of water you are bound to send out the man after the flesh; the pitcher of water washes away everything of that man and of the world; it will not allow you to follow the fashions of the world.

The master of the house seems to represent the responsible element, and he can be appealed to as one ready to answer at once to the claims of the Lord. It is a great thing when the responsible element is ready to acknowledge His claim, and we should look for that. We look for moral conditions, we must not expect to find the Lord everywhere, and I am sure the Lord has indicated the moral conditions to us in this way. There must be unleavened conditions, access for spiritual ministry and the responsible element that holds what it has in reserve for Christ and makes it available for Him the moment it is called upon. To find such conditions as that is the answer to the "Where?" Then we see the large upper room furnished — everything suitable. This seems to indicate that this man had been under the tuition of Christ in secret, and learning what was suitable to Christ — perhaps for years putting everything in the guest-chamber into suitability for the Teacher when the moment should come that it should be required. Everything there was in suitability to Christ and the disciples. What an exercise for us to have and preserve a place where everything is suitable to Christ! He puts His claim in and, if the conditions are there, He makes use of the guest-chamber, He does not leave it empty. I remember a brother who used to tell the Lord about the *little* upper room! But when there is a place for Christ it is a large place, and there is room there for all the disciples. It is a "*large* upper room". In the spiritual sphere you do not find small things: if the guest-chamber is for Christ there is room for all the disciples, and you love to tell Him what a large room it is. It is not cramped by any of the things which go on on the ground floor! The upper room is elevated above the level of the earth and the world; we are lifted above human order, traditions and earthly religion. In Acts 1 we read of the Lord being taken up and, when the disciples had seen Him taken up, they went to the upper chamber — they put themselves into correspondence with the fact that He has gone up. So now there must be an elevated character of things which is in correspondence with the fact that He has gone up. If you take up current religion you are down on the ground floor.

Rem I suppose it should be an exercise with us that these conditions should be always with us, so that whenever the Lord requires it it is ready for Him.

CAC Yes, we must not think we have reached the spot and there is an end of it; the exercise has to be kept up all the time.

It would seem to be necessary to connect verses 22 - 31 with what we have been speaking of, and that is what may be called the spiritual condition of the occasion, the exercise that all should be suitable to Him; that seems to have been the exercise of the disciples. They were exercised about eating in conditions suitable to Christ, because they say, "Where wilt thou that we go and prepare, that thou mayest eat the passover?" It was a question of what was suitable to Him. There is the thought of its being the first day of unleavened bread, and then the Lord indicates that the place would be where the man with the pitcher of water went in; it is a place where there is access for spiritual ministry. There is a need for purification and refreshment; there was something the Lord could use to wash the disciples' feet. It suggests a great thought of purity; there was that there which could remove all the soil of the world from His loved ones. There was a place where the Lord could suitably entertain His household, and He could call it "my guest-chamber". It is so connected with Himself that it is a scene controlled by Himself, where all is suited to Him. And it is furnished — "a large upper room furnished", which seems to suggest that there has been consideration about it; all had been considered that everything might be suitable to Him and to all His thought in regard to His own. These things are not put down in Scripture as a little bit of ancient history, but that we might pick up spiritual suggestions in them and give them a practical place so that we might know what it is to have things in order for the pleasure of Christ.

Ques How do we learn what is suitable to Him?

CAC Only as He becomes the Teacher to us. "The Teacher says, Where is my guest-chamber ... ?" We must get impressions from Him; He is the Teacher. There is no Teacher like Christ, and no one else can give us the sense in our affections as to what is suitable to Himself.

Ques What is indicated in the pitcher of water?

CAC The presence of the pitcher of water seems to indicate that there is a desire to be purified from everything unsuitable to Christ; we want the word to do its work with us and there is no resenting the action of the word.

Rem The disciples' thoughts seemed to go no further than the passover.

CAC No, I do not think that they could until the Lord expanded them. I think the Lord is ever ready to add something. The disciples might have said that they understood the passover — that was part of the pleasure of God. But when they prepared suitable conditions and sat down, He could spiritually add to the passover. I venture to say that, however far we have got in our knowledge of divine things, it is possible that the Lord could add something to us, perhaps tonight! The Lord is always ready. The principle of addition is an abiding principle in the ways of God; the whole Scripture is built up on that principle. God began by giving light in the garden of Eden, and for four thousand years He had been adding to the light, and now that the Lord has been here there has been great addition to the light, but the Spirit is here at the present time so that we may look for fresh impressions.

Ques Does enlargement come as a result of revelation?

CAC Yes, it is the Lord's great pleasure to add something to us so that we might come more into the precious light of God and be affected by it. As they were eating, the Lord took bread — He introduced a new feature in connection with the passover. In Matthew and in this gospel the Supper is not separated from the passover, but identified with it. As they are eating, the Lord brings in a new feature, what I regard as a great spiritual addition.

The passover speaks of Christ in His ability to take up the whole question of sin for the glory of God, to bear the judgment of sin so that the ground is cleared from God's side, and on the people's side, too; and the love in which Christ bore the judgment becomes the nourishment of His people; they eat the Lamb roast with fire. That in itself is a great apprehension of Christ, and I think nothing brings us to self-judgment but that. A person who does not know self-judgment has never eaten the passover lamb. That shows in the most touching way that what attaches to us in the flesh is of such a character that it necessitated the judgment of God, but One came in love under the judgment and was sacrificed for us, and the love in which He did it becomes the food of our hearts. I have no doubt the disciples needed to be instructed in the passover as we all do, and then as they were eating it the Lord introduced a new figure of Himself: that is, there must be a marked difference between Christ as the passover and Christ as the bread.

I think we lose by running the accounts in the gospels all together. I think the blessing lies in distinguishing them. We would not expect to find in Mark the Lord's supper, but I think we get there an apprehension of Christ that we need to prepare us for the Supper. There is no thought of remembrance in Mark and Matthew, but in Luke there is the remembrance. The thought in Matthew and Mark is that we should get an apprehension of Christ in our souls individually.

In Mark the Lord says, "Take"; He does not say 'eat' in Mark; that is in Matthew, and in a sense we must take before we can eat. It is a great thing to take the bread. The Lord brings it out in connection with the passover; "Take this: this is my body". It is more apprehension in Mark and appropriation in Matthew. Appropriation is more connected with eating, but taking is what I should call apprehension; that is, we spiritually apprehend what is set forth in that bread as His body. We have to take first and then eat. There is great spiritual instruction in this, for my impression is that if we do not understand the divine teaching of Matthew and Mark we shall not come on to Luke.

Ques How would you speak of the bread as contrasted with the passover?

CAC I think the passover brought the blessed Lord before us in His suitability and capability to deal with the whole question of sin for the glory of God. He comes in as the One who is able to take up that question and bear the judgment of what dishonoured God so as to remove it. As has often been said, 'The man under judgment has gone in judgment in the death of Christ'. That is the passover: it does not go any further than the apprehension of the wondrous ability of Christ to deal with the sin question, and how He has dealt with it by bearing the judgment so that the ground is cleared. But when the Lord says, "This is my body" — what wondrous thoughts are suggested to faith! There is no longer any question of the removal of sin, but all that is positive is suggested, the bringing in of all that is pleasurable to God in this world. In Mark's gospel particularly there is suggested what Isaiah had prepared the people for when he spoke prophetically of "My servant": that is, One has come in who is the Servant of divine pleasure in every step of His pathway here — that is more than the passover. No one but Christ could have brought in this wondrous addition; we have got to the positive side and that is never again to be dissociated from the passover. For faith it is connected with the passover now, so that not only is the question of sin settled, God glorified about it, and divine love satisfied, but all the divine pleasure and delight is come to light in a Man. Now He says, "Take". The ground must be cleared, but the One who has cleared the ground fills it. What is of an entirely new order is introduced in the bread, and He is saying to us tonight, "Take".

Ques What would the Lord breaking the bread intimate?

CAC No doubt it intimated that the divine pleasure could only take effect in regard of us through His death.

Ques If in Mark it is the servant character, what about Matthew?

CAC In Matthew He is seen in His kingly rights. He was Emmanuel, God's Anointed, and He comes in to assert all the rights of God, so in Matthew He

asserts Himself in regard to the guest-chamber. In Matthew we see the authority of heaven set forth in Him, but in Mark it is the service of God. The Lord in calling attention to His body in Mark would connect it in the minds of those having the Spirit with Psalm 40, a prepared body to do the will and pleasure of God, and would connect it too with those chapters in Isaiah which speak of "My servant". The effect of His coming in is to introduce every element that is delightful to God: that is the positive side. If we sat down in holy conditions to eat the passover, I am sure the Lord would lead us to this additional element. When the Lord says, "Take", He is saying, 'I want you to pass over from all connected with yourselves in your service God-ward to apprehend all that is connected with the service of God in perfection in Myself'. I think that is worth taking. It depends on the fact that a divine Person has come in manhood, the second Man out of heaven. Israel now will have to take up everything in relation to Christ; they will take up the law as having been made good in Christ — He made it honourable. They will take up the promises, but as all substantiated in Christ. They will take up everything in the Old Testament as seeing it made good in Christ. I think all that was in the Lord's mind when he said, "Take". But none of it could be available for us apart from His death. Just as they could not take the bread actually until He broke it, so spiritually we could not take His body apart from His death. I do not think the remnant of Israel will ever go back to the law, the promises, and the sacrificial system, apart from Christ.

What a wonderful thing it is to take it and to realise that all the pleasure of God has been secured! All that God could delight in has come here in One who had a body in this world, and He went into death in order that the pleasure of God could take effect in us. The bread brings in all that is positive as food for us so that we might get a constitution from it. When the Lord says "Take", He puts all within our reach that is in Himself, which was about to be dedicated to God in death.

Ques Here in Mark 'for you' is not added. Is it really for God?

CAC Yes. When you come to that "for you" it is the special place of the assembly; in Luke the bread and cup are "for you". I think that is limited to the assembly, it is the peculiar character of the covenant as known by the assembly; but here it is the blood shed for many, it is a wider outlook than Luke.

Ques How far does all this apply to us as remembering the Lord?

CAC My impression is that all this is what we have to take up as preparatory to coming together to remember the Lord. Individually it is what we have to understand in relation to the ways of God in Christ. We have now not only the

passover but we have this new thought of the whole pleasure of God having come in in Christ; it has become available for us through His death, and now He says, "Take".

Ques Would you say it was wrong to bring in any passover thought in connection with the Supper?

CAC I would not say it was wrong to bring in any apprehension of Christ; it is very suitable that we should start on passover lines. That is, there is a blessed sense in the soul of how the ground has been cleared. The Lord Jesus has dealt with the offences, He has borne the judgment and removed it, so the ground is clear, but on the other hand all the pleasure of God has come in. One has come in of whom Jehovah can say, "Behold my servant", Isaiah 42: 1. He comes to bring in all the pleasure of God and that is the positive side. It was something quite new which superseded the law, the sacrificial system, and the whole system of judaism. It is really starting entirely afresh. If I have taken the bread I look at the law, the promises and the sacrificial system, and I see the pleasure of God has been absolutely secured in Christ. He has gone through death so that it might be secured in a sanctified company that God has given Him. We are to be identified with the positive delight of God in Christ. That is how God looks at us, but we do not realise it until we "Take". The moral instruction is that we take all that and realise how the pleasure of God has been secured and substantiated in the fullest way in Christ. He has gone through death in order to substantiate it in us. He has taken away the first, but it does not end there; He establishes the second: that is, the pleasure of God is to be continued in the saints. When we come to that we come to eating. In Matthew it is, "Take, eat" — that is another thing: it is not only to apprehend it as true in Christ, but as true in Christ in view of being true in us. When you come to eating you come to the positive power by which it is made true in us, so there is a building up of a new constitution. If we eat it simply means,

> 'Not we may live while here below,
> But Christ our life may be'.

That is the idea of eating. We must first "take", that is apprehend, and then we must eat; we realise there is nothing at all in us for the pleasure of God which does not derive from Christ and of which Christ is not the strength. Christ is to be practically the life of the saint, that is the meaning of eating. The saints are to move on the line of meekness, lowliness, obedience, separation from the world and love; the saints are devoted to the pleasure of God — all that is involved in eating. We first apprehend it, and I suppose in

some measure we have all known what it is to "take", but we feel how little we know of what it is to "eat". In "eating" it becomes me. If I eat the thing I must have first apprehended it, taken it.

Ques Is the Lord presented in a different character in Matthew and Mark?

CAC Yes, because in Matthew we have the moral character of Christ, and in Mark His service. In Matthew we have the moral character of the King, so we have the sermon on the mount and the beatitudes, the delineation of the moral character of the One who brings the influence of heaven to bear on everything under heaven. When this is brought out it becomes a necessity for the pleasure of God that it should be perpetuated in the saints, and the power for that lies in eating. If you apprehend the pleasure of God in Christ and that He has gone through death for the service of God so that He might be perpetuated in the saints, then you have the truth of the position. You may have to bring in Matthew as power for feeding on Christ as the only source of moral strength; you cannot carry out the service or reproduce the character of Christ apart from eating.

Now we can see how to link the gospels together. Suppose you have a company of persons who have taken according to Mark and eaten according to Matthew, and they find themselves left in a world where Christ is not, what an affectionate delight they would have in calling Him to mind — that is Luke. They have taken, they have "eaten", they are morally formed after Christ; therefore they feel His absence, that He is not here. But He can be remembered here; therefore they come together for affectionate remembrance of Him; so we come to eating the Supper. There is no institution of the Supper in Matthew and Mark, but the institution is in Luke. I have been exercised to see why we have these different accounts, and I have come to this conclusion that morally we reach Luke through Mark and Matthew. God does not put it down haphazard.

Then we see there is the "cup"; it speaks of His blood, but not like the blood of the passover Lamb, which speaks of being sheltered from judgment. The cup is the blood of the covenant shed for many: the cup is the setting forth of the blood of Christ as a righteous ground on which God can set up relations between Himself and His people which give the greatest pleasure to His love. With the first covenant God found fault; the fault He found with it was that it did not make His love known to the people, and it did not put them into suitability to His love. This covenant does both; it makes known the love of God and furnishes a righteous ground on which the people are suitable to His love. The bond of agreement between God and His people can never be altered or flawed. It is a faultless covenant: there is no fault on God's side and

none on ours; and it cannot be altered, the blood seals it. This is a new thing altogether. The disciples were familiar with the thought of the covenant, but we only have the new covenant in Luke. It is 'the covenant' here; the word 'new' should not be there; it is the general thought of covenant or bond between God and His people.

Ques How do you mean it is perfect on our side?

CAC Of course it is, because the saints are subjects of the work of God; that is what makes it perfect on our side. We may not arrive at the perfection of it in our apprehensions, but that is the character of it; God has revealed Himself in the perfection of love. He says, 'It is the great yearning of my heart to be known in my love, and I am going to work with you so that you may be stripped of every bit of self-confidence, self-complacency and self-satisfaction; I will empty you of everything you have ever trusted in or thought of value, and I will give you ability to appreciate the love in which I acted to bless you'. God will bring about in His people and in Israel a new heart and a new spirit — He will bring about faultless conditions. The effect of knowing this is that you cannot keep away from that love of God; it is a powerful attraction operating on you, your conscience is clear as heaven's unclouded day, and you can enter His courts with thanksgiving. There is the love of God known in the covenant and the attraction of the Priest — a great Priest over the house of God — and our calling is set forth in the Priest and maintained in the Priest, so the nearer you come to the Priest the more you are in the perfect rest and complacency of the position which the calling gives you. J.B.S. used to say that the nearer you get to the blessed God the better off you are, and if you come right into His presence you are received with acclamations. God does not surrender anything which He claimed under the old covenant, but He has secured the establishment of it all in Christ. He dealt with the man who utterly broke down under the first covenant, and set him aside, and He says, Now I will enable you to live from an entirely new source, from Christ. As we begin to live from Christ we can say, 'We live of Thee, we have heard Thy quickening voice'. That is the idea of eating; we live of Him, and, if we do not, we do not live for the pleasure of God at all.

This principle of the covenant will spread out the love of God in its covenant action to many; it will reach every family, it is for *many*. The church knows the covenant at the present time in a peculiar and more blessed way than Israel will ever know it. The church knows the covenant as giving access to the holiest; Israel will never know that. The covenant for us is glory, but not for an earthly people; but the principle of the covenant spreads out to many. Every family will be characterised by the knowledge of God in love; what God is in

His nature will be known to every family of the redeemed, and what He is in His nature will become the unalterable bond between the blessed God and all those who are brought to know Him. We have to take this up morally; it is a preparation for remembering the Lord according to Luke. It would give us such an appreciation of what He has brought to pass that we should feel His absence; the more we learn His preciousness the more we should feel His absence in this world, and we should find our delight in coming together in an affectionate way to call Him to mind collectively. It would become a paramount influence and the irresistible claim of divine love to put us in concert with each other in the remembrance of Himself.

Ques What is the Lord referring to in "the fruit of the vine" (verse 25)?

CAC He is intimating there was to be a period of Nazariteship. The natural thought of the disciples would be that the coming of the Messiah would introduce the kingdom, and that the earth would be so ordered for the pleasure of God that it might be the proper scene of the joys of God's people. But the Lord intimates here that there was to be a time of Nazariteship, there was to be an interval, "until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God". It is a very important and necessary intimation to those who love Him that the Lord is at the present time standing aloof from joys of an earthly character; it raises the question in our affections as to whether we would care to go on with things in which Christ has no part. The Lord does not say, 'You must be apart', He does not put it in that way; He says, '*I* am going to be apart, that will be my relation to things'. Nothing could be more affecting to us than to think of the relation in which Christ stands to things.

Ques Would it include natural affections?

CAC It is more that as regards the earth the Lord is waiting until the kingdom of God comes in; that is, that until things are taken up in relation to God He can have no part in them.

Ques Does "no more" suggest He had been drinking of it until that time?

CAC I think it was an intimation to the hearts of His own that He was to take up a peculiar position quite different from anything they might have anticipated. He connects the enjoyments of the saints with another scene. The point is that the Lord is seeking to connect our joys with Himself, and with that position which He has taken up as outside this world altogether. It is not possible for Him to participate in things in which God has no place. Israel yielded no pleasure to God; it had been proved that God had no place in Israel. His kingdom was not there, and there was no part, or place, or portion for Christ except in the kingdom of God. As to anything outside the kingdom of

God He was in Nazariteship from it, in holy separation to God — that is the thought in the Nazarite. His vows were taken to Jehovah, He was separate to Jehovah. It is an appeal to every one of us that we cannot have the companionship of Christ in this world because the kingdom of God is not there. It is going to be; there is a day coming in which the kingdom of God will be brought in and every earthly joy will be taken up in relation to God. Then Christ can have His part in it and the day of His Nazariteship will be over. When the people of God take up their earthly blessings in relation to God they will have the companionship of Christ in the enjoyment of everything that God has given them. No doubt there is a present application of that — we only have the companionship of Christ in the kingdom of God. Do you think a person has the companionship of Christ when doing his own will?

If things had been right the Lord could have set everything in relation to God, and He could have shared everything that was a source of happiness with His people, but all that was impossible under the conditions that existed, so the Lord takes up this position of Nazariteship. The vine was a figure of Israel in relation to the pleasure God looked to have in Israel;

He did everything to make it productive so that there might be pleasure for Himself. Scripture says that wine "cheers God and man", Judges 9: 13. But the rejection of Christ proved that all that for the present was a complete failure. The people broke the law, despised the promises, refused the convicting word of the prophets, and finally rejected the beloved Son; so it became manifest that God had no place or portion, and the Lord took up definitely a place of separation from all which yielded no pleasure to God. That is the only position for the saints. If we go on with what yields no pleasure to God we cannot have the companionship of Christ, because He is in separation from it. The Lord defines His portion and leaves us to define ours. Where we come under the lordship of Christ there is the kingdom of God, and we can have the companionship of Christ in the kingdom of God. While the kingdom has not come publicly, and the Lord is publicly in separation from all that refuses the rights of God, yet spiritually the kingdom has come in and, as far as the blessed rule of God is known, there is pleasure for the Lord, that with which He can identify Himself. If a saint is doing the will of God he can have the companionship of Christ; Christ does not stand apart from what is pleasurable to God, He identifies Himself with it.

Ques Would taking His body lead to this?

CAC There is a beautiful moral order in all this: the feast of unleavened bread, the passover, and then the Lord introducing in the bread the thought of His own blessed character as Jehovah's Servant, bringing in all for the pleasure of

God. He says, 'You apprehend that, take it'. No doubt it is divinely intended that what is presented in the different gospels should be carried on; we do not have the same thoughts of the Supper in the different gospels. In Mark what is presented is an apprehension of the character of divine pleasure that has come here in Christ.

Ques What do you mean by carrying on?

CAC You must not drop out Mark in being occupied with Luke; every aspect of the Supper must be carried on, the aspect that Matthew and Mark present as well as the aspect that Luke presents. What is presented in Mark and Matthew is preparatory to what we find in Luke. It is only when we come to Luke that we have the institution of the Supper; there is no intimation in Matthew or Mark that it is to be done again.

Ques Have you any thought as to the difference between blessing and giving thanks? In Luke the Lord gives thanks; here He blesses the bread and gives thanks for the cup.

CAC Yes, there is a simple difference. If anything is blessed it is invested with a divine or spiritual character; it is clothed with the divine value of what is contained in the blessing. When the Lord took the bread He took it from the furnished passover table, and He blessed it, He clothed that bread with a new significance that no bread in this world ever had before. That is the thought in blessing; it is putting a new and divine and spiritual character on the thing or person, whatever it is that is blessed. It is putting that thing in relation to a spiritual order of things in an entirely new way — that is what the Lord did with the bread; He blessed it and clothed it with a new character. What a marvellous thing that He should have taken bread! It was not only that He was capable of bearing the judgment of man under judgment, and clearing away all that was offensive to God — that was the passover, and He was able to do it all in the capability of His own Person; but He could also bring in everything that was positively delightful to God, everything for the pleasure of God, and when He said, "this is my body", He clothed that bread with all the spiritual significance of what came into this world in His own body as Jehovah's Servant, One who came here to bring in the pleasure of God and to secure it in every detail. It is not only a question of removing what was offensive to God but of bringing in all that was for God's delight. That is the point in Mark. Now the Lord says, "*Take* this". We are to take it and carry on the significance of it. Every individual soul must take that bread in the character which the blessing of the Lord has invested it with.

Ques Would it be discerning the Lord's body?

CAC Yes. It might be possible for the saints to come together for the Supper and eat their own supper. The point in 1 Corinthians is the contrast between the saints eating their own supper and eating the Lord's supper. If I am eating my own supper I am doing something in relation to myself, but if I am eating the Lord's supper I am doing something in relation to Him, and for that there must be the distinguishing of the body; if there is not that all the moral value is lost. The Lord came here according to Hebrews 10: "a body hast thou prepared me", and that superseded the whole sacrificial system; it has all been taken up in Christ, all for the pleasure of God is there. Now He says, 'Take it, apprehend it'. The pleasure of God can only take effect in regard to you and me through the death of Christ: He came in not only as the Object of eternal pleasure but as the Servant of eternal pleasure. Isaiah tells us so much about "my servant"; everything is to hang on Him. That is the aspect of the body presented to us in Mark; it is the blessed humanity of the Lord viewed as Jehovah's Servant, carrying out His pleasure, and going into death that that pleasure might be effected in the saints. It is a great thing to take that.

Ques. How about Matthew?

CAC Matthew adds to it the thought of eating. What has come in in Christ is not only to be apprehended but appropriated, eaten, so that we delight on our part to speak well of it; we clothe it in our affections with all the value it has on God's part. The saints are intelligently and affectionately capable to bless the cup — what a dignity it puts on us! We can give the cup in our minds and hearts the character that attaches to it.

Ques Is there a reason why in Luke the Lord gives thanks for both the bread and the cup?

CAC I have no doubt that it is in the perfection of wisdom that all these things come in. In Luke the Lord gives thanks for the bread because it is a question there of appropriating to the saints all that was expressed in His body; He takes it up on our side in thanksgiving. In the midst of His saints He gives thanks; He is the first One to appropriate for His saints all the precious value of what came out in His body; He appropriated it on our behalf in thanksgiving. In Luke we have the institution of the Supper and the continued affectionate remembrance, and it is touching in that connection that the Lord should take a place on our side in thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is on our side, blessing is more God's side; the difference is important. The Lord could give the bread its character, that is one thing; but then in Luke we find Him giving thanks for the character He has put on it, so we can join Him in that.

Luke anticipates the assembly; it is addressed to a gentile; it has in view assembly truth taking form among the gentiles, the affectionate remembrance

of the Lord among the gentiles. Luke's account of the institution is almost identical with the previous account which Paul received from heaven. The first knowledge of the Supper which we gentiles got came direct from heaven to us. Think of the Lord telling us gentiles from heaven what happened in that upper room! 1 Corinthians was written before Luke's gospel. It is interesting that it should come from heaven first, that the Lord should give it to Paul to deliver to us gentiles. The Lord directly tells Paul what happened in that upper room.

The saints are put in an extraordinary position spiritually; they are able intelligently to speak of the cup according to the blessed character it really has. One can see that a soul standing in the value of all that would be quite prepared for Nazariteship, to understand that there was a whole system of things in which Christ had no part. It is very suggestive that this hint comes in. The Lord intimates to them that He was to take a place of Nazariteship and not drink of the fruit of the vine. Now the thing for us is that we do not want to have our place or portion in things from which Christ is holding aloof. Men may say that they are very good things, which minister to their pleasure and advantage, but what relation has Christ to them? What is His attitude? If He holds aloof it is right for the saints to, and if not holding aloof they cannot have the companionship of Christ.

It is very beautiful to see that in Matthew the Lord speaks of drinking it with His disciples in the kingdom of His Father "until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father", Matthew 26: 29. What a delightful thought that gives of the kingdom! The Father's kingdom brings in the thought of affection. If you want to know what the Father's kingdom is, you must learn it in Christ; it will take form in the sons. The Lord says, "the kingdom of my Father" what a blessed place it had in Christ, everything there under the rule of the Father, and what complacency there was for the Father's love in that blessed One! What satisfaction He had in having such a Son! His drinking it new in the Father's kingdom suggests that the saints are brought into the same place and complacency with Christ before the Father; so the saints are to stand in the same holy relationship that He was in. The Father's kingdom is to take form in the saints. It has come about just so far as we have been formed in the spiritual affections which belong to sons. Wherever you find the saints formed in the spirit of sonship there is the kingdom of the Father.

It is very interesting to see that the kingdom of God has come in spiritually, and it is possible now for saints to take up things in relation to God so that even natural things are taken up in the kingdom of God. The way the households of the saints are conducted, and the way they conduct their

business, and all the character the saints take in their responsible lives — all these things are taken up in the kingdom of God and then the companionship of Christ is known. He comes near to us in our personal and family exercises; He does not stand apart from anything in the kingdom of God, but He stands apart from everything that is not according to that kingdom.

It is wonderful to think that there is a sphere where the character of the Father is known and where there are affections such as are found in the Son who ever delighted to do the Father's will. The Father's kingdom is perfectly set forth in Christ. When the Lord told the disciples to ask for it to come, they had watched Him three and a half years and seen the Father's kingdom set forth in Him, so they might well desire it to come. Matthew is the gospel which tells us of being brought into sonship; the Lord says to Peter, "take that and give it to them for me and thee", Matthew 17: 27. Peter was to be with Him in sonship. It is wonderful to be taken into that blessed partnership with Him so that we are going on with things in which we can have His company; there is no true happiness outside that. Things may be gratifying to you according to the flesh, but there is no happiness in going on with them if we cannot have His company.

Ques Is the Father's kingdom a greater thought than the kingdom of God?

CAC The kingdom of God is the moral side — "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit"; but the Father's kingdom is a different thing. The Father's kingdom in a rightly ordered house would mean that everything there is according to family affections and relationship; affection is the thought in the Father's kingdom.

Ques Why did the Lord give the cup to the disciples when He did not drink it Himself?

CAC The Lord was leading them, and is seeking to lead us, into the character of the blessing of which the cup speaks. It is joy of a spiritual order connected with the kingdom of God, an entirely new character of joy connected with the knowledge of God revealed in love. He was bringing that in through death. The blessing we have now has come through death and cannot be connected with this present world.

We can understand they could sing after all this. How could they help it! No doubt the Lord led the singing. Then they go out to the mount of Olives. It is a wonderful thing to be able to take common ground with Christ before God; that is the thought of singing a hymn.

Ques Have you any thought what the hymn was?

CAC It might have been the usual paschal hymn the Jews were accustomed to sing on that occasion from Psalm 113 to 118; it might have been that hymn ending with 'Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar'. It would have been a very appropriate hymn.

Ques What about going to the mount of Olives?

CAC It suggests heavenly associations: it was from the mount of Olives the Lord ascended later on and it was the place of His retiring. When others went to their homes, He went to the mount of Olives.

Rem "His feet shall stand ... upon the mount of Olives".

CAC Yes, He is coming back to the mount of Olives and then the saints will come back with Him as a heavenly company. The wonderful thing suggested here is that where He goes His loved ones can go. Think of that as coming in after the Supper and the singing of the hymn! Singing is that they are able to take common ground with Christ or that He is able to take common ground with us in singing to God, and then we should have the privilege of going with Him where He goes. He came into death for that purpose.

Ques Ought we not to be in expectation for a word from the Lord?

CAC It is very delightful if the Lord does give a word, but it is wonderful to be able to move with Him. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God". It is all a question of the movement of affection and it cannot be imitated. You cannot go to the mount of Olives because you make up your mind to; it is all a question of the movements of affection. It is impossible to lay down rules if you recognise the headship of Christ; you cannot prescribe what is going to take place or where He will lead us. It is a question of the wisdom and activities of His love, and nothing but love can follow the lead of Christ — we are all tested as to that. A word of exhortation at such a time is out of place. The only word that is suitable from the standpoint of assembly privilege is a word that will qualify us for the mission on which He sends us into this world. It is not exhortation or rebuke, but a word to qualify you to represent Him in the place where He is not. In John 20 He not only says, "I ascend" but 'I send' — "as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you". Any word in keeping with assembly privilege would qualify the saints for the mission. One would not like to set any limits to the Lord's prerogative. If saints are not up to privilege they might get something else, but we ought to see that there is the privilege of singing a hymn and going to the mount of Olives. Nothing delights the heart of God more than that we should be in spirit in liberty for the Head to lead us.

Ques I suppose the first verse we read is quoted from Zechariah 13: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd"?

CAC Yes. The smiting of the Shepherd was the greatest test that had come upon the disciples. The Lord rightly measured the severity of the test, for He says, "All ye shall be offended". That the service of the Shepherd could end in that way was a very great test. The natural thought, and the thought of faith, too, would be that, if the Messiah came in, that would secure everything. "I will smite the shepherd" was a solemn testimony on God's part that even Christ after the flesh could not be the gathering centre. The association in which Christ had been with His own and in which they had been with Him was about to terminate; it was not by the wickedness of men but by the call of Jehovah that the Shepherd should be smitten. It shows that if the flock was to be gathered for God's pleasure it must be on the ground of resurrection. The earthly association which had continued some years was not an abiding one; it was to terminate by the smiting of the Shepherd. Even Christ after the flesh, Christ as having come into the condition of flesh and blood, could not be the centre and gathering point for all that was in the mind of God; all must be on the ground of His death and resurrection.

Rem He said, "After I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee".

CAC Yes. It was a great test to the disciples to give up all the flesh, but then even Christ after the flesh was to be removed — "I will smite the shepherd". It is exceedingly solemn. He is not here cut off by the wickedness of man but by the call of Jehovah, showing the utter hopelessness of setting things up according to the flesh. Things are not set up for the pleasure of God even by Christ after the flesh.

Ques What connection is there between this and the mount of Olives?

CAC The moment we get a hint of accompanying the Lord into heavenly associations there follows the break-up of all earthly associations. If we are to have part with Christ and pass with Him to the mount of Olives, that necessarily involves the break-up of earthly associations, even the blessed association the sheep had been in with the Shepherd for three and a half years. The only good and perfect thing there was on earth had to be brought to an end by the smiting of the Shepherd; if things are to be gathered up for God it must be in resurrection. It is Christ as having died and risen again who is the gathering centre for the flock of God, and sheep gathered on that ground are never to be scattered.

The Lord said, "All ye shall be offended" — they would find an occasion of stumbling. Are we prepared to accept and follow God's way though it is

altogether different from anything we supposed or expected? The disciples were all looking for things to be set up according to the flesh, but that was not the divine thought at all. If they forgot that Israel, as well as all other people, were under death, God never forgot the real state of things.

These chapters in regard to the Lord's death are most affecting. While they secure Him a very precious place in our affections, they become a very real test whether that is the Christ we are identified with and followers of, and whether we are committed to all that is involved in His death. Peter thought he was equal to any test, and the others seem to be of the same mind.

Rem Nothing is more affecting than that the One whose life was so perfect had to die.

CAC Yes. In seeing that Christ after the flesh has gone, we learn the setting aside of the order of man after the flesh much more solemnly than by seeing the failure of the children of Adam. If the perfect Man after the flesh has gone, what about the man of sin and shame? To really understand it takes out the very roots of self-confidence. The fact that Peter and the disciples all said that they would not deny Him and were prepared to die with Him, shows how little they had taken in the Lord's words.

He went into death to establish the pleasure of God in such a way that it never could be disturbed again, where there was no failure and no scattering; all was to be gathered up and carried over in resurrection and Christ was to be the beginning, the starting-point of everything for God.

Ques Why did the Lord lead them to Galilee?

CAC It intimates that the Lord would lead them to a place of reproach. He does not say He would go before them to Zion; it was not to lead them to the kingdom, but to that place of reproach and lowliness where the light of God should be found when all here waited for the kingdom. As the risen One He leads to Galilee. Everything had failed on their side, and we see the Lord indicating the right path.

Rem If every link is broken for us He becomes the door where we can join Him in another place.

CAC The way to join Him is by coming under the influence of all it cost Him to reach the spot. These chapters that bring out the sorrows of the Lord are most important in a practical sense because nothing will draw us after Him but the sense of His love. We have to learn the reality of His love by the depth of the sorrow He went through. That practically is the only way to follow the Lord; there is no other. We do not follow Him to resurrection except by way of the

sorrows of His love. My feeling is we do not dwell enough on the sorrows of Christ; I think we have perhaps recoiled from the sentimental way in which some would occupy themselves with the sorrows of Christ, but nothing should rob us from dwelling spiritually on the sorrows of Christ. I think we have to do spiritually what the disciples failed to do; they failed to watch. He called them in the garden to watch; it was a call to be observant of the depth of His sorrow. We find they could not watch; they went to sleep. I am afraid that is often our condition; we fail to be observant of the sorrows of His love. With the disciples the spirit was willing but the flesh weak; and we are controlled practically by what is fleshly rather than by what is spiritual. Nothing could affect a spiritual mind like the sorrow of the Lord. His triumphs, or His glory, or all the wider stretches of kingdom splendour, or even the blessedness of heaven, could not move the heart like the depths of His sorrow. We all dread the way of suffering and death, but that way becomes very blessed to us when we see it is the way His love has taken. It is the way He has gone, what He has felt;

it is how He has had to express the deep emotions of His soul to His Father. In thinking of Him we get practical deliverance from ourselves and from thinking of ourselves.

Ques What was the cause of the Lord's sorrow here?

CAC The cause was the unspeakable cost at which alone the Father's will could be carried out. The service of the Father's pleasure could only be carried out at infinite cost to a divine Person come in manhood, and what is brought before us here by the Spirit is to give our affections a deep impression of what it cost. "He began to be amazed and oppressed in spirit. And he says to them, My soul is full of grief even unto death".

Ques Do the sorrows bring out His perfections as a Man?

CAC They do. They bring out His preparedness to surrender all, so that the Father's will might be carried out; and this service cost untold suffering. The Lord was the only One who could estimate what death was, and the only One who could estimate what sin was or Satan's power. The Lord is found in these circumstances, not simply by the necessity of man's state, but by the necessity of the Father's will. It is a question of the Father's will entirely; everything is referred to that. He says, "all things are possible to thee". The Father's will is not controlled by any circumstances. Everything is seen to hang on the Father's will; that was the only reason why He was there, because of the Father's will. That will which was absolute, sovereign and free, under no restraint or constraint, that will had determined that things should take that course — the Father's will was the only reason why He was there. I think what

the Lord would bring before us is that the Father's will alone determined all the conditions of His path and all involved in that path. The Father's will was carried out at the utmost cost to Himself: His will was that His Son in manhood should go that way of sorrow, and suffering, and death. What was it to the Father to devote such a Son to that pathway, and what was it to that Son to take such a pathway! We see the infinite cost in His prayer; it shows the intensity of the sorrow of His love. He says, "all things are possible to thee: take away this cup from me; but not what I will, but what *thou* wilt".

Ques He speaks to God as Servant?

CAC Yes — "not what I will, but what *thou* wilt". He speaks as the Servant Son. He speaks in all the intimate confidence of the relationship, but as feeling all the cost at which it had to be carried out. It was His perfection to deprecate the drinking of the cup. If He had not been who He was, His whole soul would not have recoiled from the drinking of the cup. It involved being made sin, being forsaken of God. All His perfection would have been belied if He had not shrunk from drinking the cup, but His recoiling from it only serves to bring out the absolute devotion of His heart to the Father's will. It was the perfection of His will as Man to shrink from drinking the cup, but that serves to bring out His devotion to the Father's will — "not what I will but what thou wilt". One feels the need for intense personal holiness if we are to take account of it, to watch such a scene, and the Lord desired that His disciples should watch. They could not watch because they had not the Spirit, but we can do spiritually what they could not do. We can watch and take account of the scene, of the sensibilities of the holy Sufferer and the sorrows of His love, and find Him endeared to our hearts in such a way that we can be drawn after Him right through the sorrow to a scene of cloudless joy. We lose sight of the power of it if we lose sight of the sorrow through which it has all been secured.

What we see here is not atonement, but it is the Lord going through it all with the Father and calling His own to be observant of it and to watch. He calls His own to take account of what He goes through with the Father and what He and the Father alone could fathom or measure. He calls us to take account of it so that we might know the way He has gone, and the feelings of His holy soul in going that way, so that we might contemplate Him and watch with Him. I doubt if we take sufficient account of the sufferings and sorrows of Christ; it demands a degree of holiness that perhaps few of us are up to, and it brings us down as nothing else can.

Ques Why do you think that the Lord took only Peter, James and John with Him?

CAC The Lord on several occasions selected them. He took them with Him into the chamber of death when He was about to raise the damsel, so that they might learn there His complete power over death. Then He took them to the mount of transfiguration, that they might learn the holy splendour of the kingdom as centering in Him. And He took them to the garden, that they might learn to go behind the scenes, and learn the sorrow and the expense at which His love could meet death and bring in the kingdom glory. In Gethsemane they learnt the secret of what it cost Him to bring the dead to life, and what it cost to gather up in His own Person all the kingdom glory. What did it not cost Him to do it!

Ques Is this, "I have trodden the winepress alone"?

CAC No, that is an action of judgment; His garments are red there with the blood of His enemies. Gethsemane means the winepress, but what we see there is the personal cost to the holy Sufferer. What we see in Bozrah, where He treads the winepress alone, is the unsparing judgment and destruction of His enemies. Those who are not subdued, and humbled, and touched by the sorrows of Gethsemane will ultimately come under His feet to be trodden down in judgment. His glories appear and the greatness of His strength in which He travels in judgment — they are just as real as the deep sorrows of His love. All will have to confess Him and bow the knee to Him. Those who do it now are touched by the sorrows of His love, but those not melted in that way will have to be crushed. Every knee shall bow. Everything that is true joy and spiritual power comes by the sorrow of His love.

Rem The Lord felt the disciples not watching.

CAC The Lord turns to think of their side when He finds them asleep, and He says, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation". How often the Lord has to do that! When we do not watch with Him He turns to consider our side and our needs, and how to keep us out of trouble.

(Notes on chapter 15 are not available.)

MARK 16

Mark 16

CAC The place the women have in relation to resurrection is a very noticeable feature. I think the women would represent what was inwardly wrought of God, that state of the affections which must underlie the public service if it is to have any value. The man takes the first place in public service clearly, but in regard of personal devotion the woman has a peculiar glory. If the testimony is about to take an entirely new character, the Lord would have the affections of His saints to be enlightened as to it so that there might be a state of heart that would support the public witness.

Rem The women's affections were shown in their following the Lord to the cross, and then seeing where He lay; they appeared in the resurrection scene again.

CAC Yes, it is blessed to recognise that spiritual affections and devotion to Christ are found in the saints; they often need to be enlightened and liberated, but they are there. It encourages one, in desiring to help the saints, that affection and devotedness are there at the bottom, the result of the Father's teaching and drawing, so that there is something to work on in the saints. I think it gives confidence and steadiness in all service to know it is not beating the air. Paul loved to recognise the spiritual condition present and to build on it. But often, though there are spiritual affections and devotion of heart, there is an unpreparedness as to the way the testimony may move and the different shape in which it may manifest itself. We see in this chapter that no one is equal to the greatness of the divine thought but the Lord Himself, and it is only in personal contact with Him that we become equal to it. We find that in the first section of the chapter they do not catch a glimpse of Him, hence there is no testimony, nothing but amazement, alarm and fear, which shows that the divine truth of resurrection was not in power in the soul.

Ques What is power in the soul?

CAC I think in this chapter the power is seen to have its source in the Lord Himself; its spring is there. In the disciples, whether men or women, we do not see conditions of power. If the true character of the testimony is set forth, it is set forth in a figurative way in the young man sitting at the right of the sepulchre, but it is not seen personally in the women or men; the power was in the Lord. All the power that comes in is the power of the Lord, and His word invests them with power; it is His own working with them that accomplishes the result.

My impression is that in a chapter like this we see the firmament of His power (Psalm 150), the wonderful expanse of His power. There were limitations in the days of His flesh, things were contracted, but in resurrection what an expanse at once! The firmament of His power reaches out to all creation. We need a great sense of the character of divine power; it is resurrection power, and nothing can contribute to it that is of the flesh or nature. I do not think we learn to part company with everything of the natural order without going through an exercise that would correspond with the amazement and alarm of the women.

Rem We get a shock sometimes in finding we are trusting to something that is not divine power.

CAC Yes, and not following the Lord to the divine end. Devotion may go so far after the Lord and yet not be prepared for the exceeding greatness of what God has before Him and the character of holiness which is connected with the power of that scene. The thoughts of affection stop short. There is a devotion prepared to honour Christ at personal cost; they brought the aromatic spices, there was love. True devotion may even be on the line of retaining the Lord in a place and condition not in the thought of God; they came to embalm Him. They were in the divine school, learning the character of the testimony as it was said to be, and the character of power that would maintain it; but they were not equal to it. The Lord had said a good deal to them about His death and resurrection, but they had never taken it in.

Rem The disciples did not realise who He was, that death could not hold Him. Peter had the revelation that He was the Son of God, and yet did not believe in the resurrection.

CAC Yes, it is possible for us to have things in our souls and yet not to have estimated them aright. It does not follow that we know the greatness of, or have taken the full dimensions of, what we have as taught of God. As to resurrection it could not be apprehended until it had taken substantiality in the Person of Christ. It was substantiated in Him before it could be apprehended or realised.

What has impressed me in this chapter is the importance of reaching the presence of the Lord; it is His presence that brings power. "The Lord working with them" is power; the greatness of power is in Himself.

Ques How does the young man come in? Does he indicate where to see Him?

CAC I think they had to learn in the sepulchre the divine secret. I should suppose we have set forth figuratively in the young man the character of the testimony, the energy and purity and power that would mark it: all is set forth

representatively in the young man. Then he is sitting at the right; I think that sets forth the power of the Lord's right hand.

"Thy right hand, Jehovah, is become glorious in power ... hath dashed in pieces the enemy"; death and the grave were despoiled. After that who could want human or natural power? The power of that mighty hand is glorious in power, and the expanse in which that power acts is illimitable, it moves out to all creation. The women have divine light about it all, but that is not sufficient to deliver them from amazement, alarm and fear. The Lord Himself does not appear, they do not get a glimpse of Him, and without Him there is no power. We all know what it is to have a good deal of light and to understand a good deal about the testimony in terms, but what about the power?

Ques In Mark we get two young men: one in chapter 14 who fled, and one here. Does the first represent energy in seeking to follow Christ without power?

CAC Yes. The young man in the garden represents a natural desire to follow the Lord; he has a linen cloth cast about his body, but he is not invested with it properly. It is like having the truth in terms and phrases but not being clothed with it so as to take personal character from it; so when the testing comes he leaves the garment and flees. The garment and the man were separable. But here the young man is clothed in a white garment; we have here the true character of the testimony and all is in the power of Christ's right hand. Think of the security of it!

Rem The women came to seek Him.

CAC Yes, but they were not moving quickly enough; they came early to the sepulchre but not early enough. The Lord moved earlier than they did. What they found was that it was a region of power; death was not there. There was nothing to embalm; difficulties were not there; weakness was not there. They found themselves in the firmament of His power, but they were not equal to it. They had an intimation in verse 7 of the character of service that was to go on. The conditions in which the service to be rendered are indicated, and the kind of people that the Lord would use in service. "Tell his disciples and Peter" — such people as Peter were to be vessels of service for the testimony. People who had to learn their own weakness and prove the Lord's restoring grace would now have ability to follow Him in a new power and serve Him in obscurity apart from all the pretensions of Jerusalem.

Ques Is that why Galilee is mentioned?

CAC Yes, to indicate the kind of sphere in which power would be exercised, in Galilee; not in setting up the kingdom in David's city. The Lord goes first;

everything hangs on Him in this chapter.

It is helpful to see that all that had come out in the Lord in the days of His flesh, that wonderful service which constitutes the glad tidings, is all carried through in resurrection; and things get a wonderful expansion in resurrection because that is outside of human limitations. The Spirit is not brought in here, but the wonderful power of the Lord; the Lord works with them and the Lord clothes them with the glory and greatness of the commission.

Ques Would the different accounts of the resurrection in the gospels be due to the resurrection being spiritually apprehended? There is a great difference in each gospel.

CAC God never intended in the Scriptures that it should be made to fit and tie. Everything is presented in divine perfection and suitability, and every touch is a divine touch. What Mark presents is in suitability to the whole character of his gospel; it is the ministry of Christ all through the gospel, and it is still His ministry in resurrection. Whatever value the disciples get or display is all that with which He clothes them.

Ques You said the disciples were in school. Does the end of this chapter show that they have qualified in their schooling? The power is personal to them now.

CAC Yes, they have learned experimentally their own inadequacy. That is the lesson we all have to learn in regard to every bit of service. We have to learn our own inadequacy, whether on the line of affection as set forth in the women, or on the line of active energy as seen in the men. We are not equal to the immensity of what is proposed, but the Lord is perfectly equal to it all, and there is a power that is absolutely illimitable and which fills the whole expanse so that all creation can be visited in blessing.

The women reveal their unpreparedness for this new order of things. "Trembling and excessive amazement possessed them". It is often so. A truly devoted heart may not be ready to take peacefully an unexpected path in which the only support is resurrection power. The Lord Himself does not appear in this section, and hence there is nothing but fear in the warmest hearts, and there is no testimony.

The next section is obviously different. We get the testimony of the three witnesses disbelieved, and the eleven reproached with unbelief and hardness of heart. The whole seems intended to show how the strength of the service as continued here was in the Lord Himself. He takes them up and gives them a universal mission. It is "to all the creation". That is, men are looked at as God's creation, and the glad tidings is concerning Christ in His wonderful service. We

sometimes take a limited view of the gospel, but it covers all the service of Christ as brought out in the gospel. "He that believes and is baptised shall be saved". One must take one's place definitely with Christ in separation from the world. "Saved" and "condemned" are the two contrasts here. "Saved" is that one is brought to own Christ, and to get the good of His service. If one disbelieves, he shows the state of his heart; he must be condemned.

It is a wonderful thing that it is "to all the creation" here. The Lord's bringing that out to those He has had to reproach with hardness of heart just shows that virtue was in Himself and not in them. It is a wonderful thought that the Lord in this character of service has the whole creation in view. It is God's creation and it is in the view of God for blessing because it is His creation. It would help us to think of men as God's creatures. I often thank Him that I am His creature; it is a blessed thing. All men stand in relation to God as His creatures, and they all come into the sphere of the service of Christ, the service of blessing which He is rendering. The glad tidings in Mark would include all that is in his gospel. We get the beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, but nothing about the end; we have not come to that yet. All that is set forth in the blessed service of Christ can be announced as glad tidings to men: how He can, in serving God, meet all conditions amongst men. He came to meet it all.

Now we are in this great expanse, not limited, but the service widening out to all creation. How it magnifies the greatness of Christ, the blessed goodness of God which will be served by His Son in relation to all creation! One loves to think of it and that the blessing is so fully secured in Christ for all creation.

Ques The Lord is still working?

CAC Yes, the gospel is going on; Mark is not finished.

The Lord said that certain signs would follow for those that believe, and all that the Lord said was literally fulfilled.

Ques Why did the signs cease so soon?

CAC I suppose they ceased as soon as the wisdom of God perceived that they had done their work. In Hebrews 2 we read of God bearing witness to the word by signs and wonders; the early brethren had the confirmation of these signs. There are wonderful moral signs seen today in the hearts of men — demons cast out and people speaking new tongues; a man who has been a filthy man and speaking foul language begins to speak a new tongue under the influence of grace. But there were outward signs at first. We find in 1 Corinthians 12 that all had not miraculous gifts — "are all in possession of miraculous powers?" No, they were not, and Paul encourages them to follow

the line of love and edifying, which is greater than outward signs. Here the signs are connected with the commission. "They ... preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs following upon it". That is how christianity was established in the world; wherever the apostles and Paul went preaching the word there were outward signs of the power of God connected with the proclamation of the glad tidings. F.E.R. used to say, 'If people go to the heathen they ought to go with miracles'. The test is the glad tidings. Whatever signs may be given among people who do not know the truth to assure them that it is of God, yet the glad tidings are the test and bring to light the condition of heart of everyone. If a man disbelieves he exposes his own condition of heart; those believing the signs only were not saved. The Lord did not attach any value to believing because of signs; the fact of seeing a miracle would not convert anybody. The greatest miracle of all is the Lord, and to set Him before people in the service of His love. What a big gospel we have to preach if we only preach Mark's gospel! The service of love has been going on ever since. Sitting at the right hand of God is a beautiful finish to the gospel.

One often thinks of the great expanse in which God is working — all the continents of the earth. Who can tell how many souls are reached and blessed every day? We should be astonished if we knew. The work of the Lord is going on in resurrection power, and it will go on until the end.

EZRA 1

Ezra 1

We have been following the history of Israel and Judah down to the point when they were carried away captive on account of their departure from God. It is now thought well to read the books which speak of the return of a remnant from captivity. Jehovah had in mind that there should be recovery. He had been prophesying of it by His servants, and providing for it by His ways in government, even before the iniquity of His people had reached its height. In applying this to ourselves of the present period it is good to see that, while the christian profession was following a downward course in the direction of apostasy, God had in His mind the thought of a remnant being brought back to the truth as it was in the beginning. The epistles to Sardis and Philadelphia both suggest movements of recovery, for Sardis is addressed as having "received and heard". There had been a divine giving and speaking which it was necessary to "keep" if the Lord's favour in so giving and speaking was to have a right response. This we believe to have reference to that part of the christian profession which benefited so greatly by what is known as the Reformation, which was clearly on God's part a movement of recovery. Then Philadelphia is addressed as having a little power, and as having kept Christ's word, and as having not denied His name, and as having kept the word of His patience. It is evident that this implies recovery to that which was from the beginning, so that it speaks of true assembly conditions being found at the end so that Philadelphia becomes the subject of Christ's complacent love and commendation. This speaks to us of recovery as clearly as Jeremiah's prophecy spoke of seventy years being accomplished in the desolations of Jerusalem. It was Daniel understanding by books the number of the years that led him to make confession of the sin of his people, and to cry so earnestly to Jehovah to cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary which was desolate, and to favour the city and the people that were called by His name, see Daniel 9: 1 - 19.

There was very little thought of what answered to Jerusalem or the house of God for many centuries, but over a hundred years ago God stirred up many hearts to pray, and to search the Scriptures, that they might return to what was in His mind — with regard to His saints ever since Pentecost, but which had been grievously departed from. God has no thought of setting up anything new; He would have all His saints to return to His original thoughts, in which they are all entitled by His grace to have part. All that is the outcome of the death of Christ, and that is connected with the presence of the Spirit here; all that is bound up with the lordship and headship of Christ, and that enters into

the truth of the assembly and the service of God, is there for saints to return to if their spirits are stirred up to do so.

There was scripture to justify great expectations in the time of Daniel and Ezra, just as there was scripture to justify great expectations when the assembly revival began over a hundred years ago. I suppose there was also an intuitive sense that it would not be like God to leave things as they were until the rapture. For it was written that "the Spirit and the bride say, Come". This in itself would suggest that something would be found at the end having the true character of the bride, and able to say, Come, in concert with the Spirit. I have no doubt that this, apprehended either intelligently or intuitively, led many saints to cry to God to favour His people, and to move in restoring mercy so that a remnant might be recovered to the divine centre, and that the truth of the house of God and of the service of God might be set up again in the faith and love of His people after being desolate in any spiritual sense for many centuries. I have no doubt that it was in answer to much exercise and prayer, founded upon the Scriptures, that God gave such a precious ministry of His own thoughts concerning Christ and the assembly more than a hundred years ago. This ministry, continued by His grace ever since, has stirred up many hearts, and encouraged many hearts, to return from what is really Babylonish captivity to have a part in the setting up of the true service of God in accord with the truth of the assembly. Where there is confession of departure and confidence in God that He will do something for His name and for His house, we may be sure that He will do something which answers in this day to what He did for His people in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. I think we can say, very humbly but very thankfully, that He has done so.

But the place which the kings of Persia had in relation to the return from captivity, and the rebuilding of the house and the city, is remarkable and instructive. We do well to take note of it, because there has been something similar in our day. The Persian monarchy represents generally an aspect of world power which God can make use of for the good of His people, and for the furtherance of what He has in His mind. Cyrus had been marked out, and even mentioned by name, long before he was born, as we may see in Isaiah 41: 2; Isaiah 44: 28; Isaiah 45: 1 - 5; Isaiah 48: 14. Daniel, as having read his Bible, would know all about this; it would encourage his prayer greatly. If we paid more attention to our Bibles there would be more encouragement and power in our prayers. People who read Isaiah casually might have passed over what was said about Cyrus, but the right attitude of faith depended upon it being taken in. God had marked out a wonderful service for Cyrus, though He says that Cyrus did not know Him. He was made to contribute in a wonderful way to the building of God's house and of the holy city.

I am afraid we do not think sufficiently of how God has moved in His government of the world in order to make a way for His people to return from Babylonish captivity. In certain countries, at any rate, God has brought about conditions in the world which are favourable to the return from captivity of all those whose spirit is stirred up in relation to His house. God foresaw what He was about to do in a spiritual way, and in restoring mercy to His people, and He made provision for it in His ordering of human events. A certain liberation has been granted in this and other lands, so that the world power does not hinder; it gives liberty for the working out in a practical way of what is in the mind of God. Not very long since we might, according to the law of this land, have been put in prison or punished severely if we had not conformed to that order of religious service which the world approved. But God has moved in the sphere of political things, and He has brought about conditions which give liberty for spiritual movements. Not a single saint, in England at any rate, is hindered by the world power from returning to the divine centre, or from working out with his brethren the truth of the house of God. No one is held captive in Babylon by the political powers that are in authority in the world. This is an immense favour from God which has been brought about by His faithfulness, and it is also the answer to the faithfulness and prayers of a remnant of His people. God knew centuries ago what He was going to do; He had in mind to deliver His people from an order of things which was really Babylonish, and to bring them back to the truth of the assembly, so that His service might be carried on in a spiritual way. And He has ordered things politically in view of this. But getting the gain of it is dependent upon spiritual conditions being maintained in the hearts of the saints. The liberty granted to us has come about through many exercises and prayers and sufferings of the people of God, and if we become lax spiritually we cannot count on a continuance of liberty.

The Lord speaks to Philadelphia as the One who "has the key of David, he who opens and no one shall shut, and shuts and no one shall open". And He says, "behold, I have set before thee an opened door, which no one can shut, because thou hast a little power, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name". The opened door is conditional upon His word being kept and His name confessed. If the conditions are present on our side the Lord will undoubtedly exercise His power as having the key of David to open the door and keep it open. If saints are ready to move spiritually the Lord will see to it that there is an opened door before them.

A great system of bondage has been set up, but there is liberty to get out of it. If believers are found listening to the preaching of unconverted men it is a terrible bondage. If one who knows in his own soul the liberty of the Spirit of

sonship has to take part in an ordered service in which that Spirit has no place, he is in captivity. A system of things which is designed to go on without the Spirit of God, and does go on without Him, can only be bondage to one who knows that all his relations with God are in the Spirit, and that he can only worship by the Spirit of God. God feels the captivity of His people, and He has made provision for their liberation. "Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah the God of Israel — he is God — which is at Jerusalem". It is important to understand that the service of God can only go on in the place where He has set His name. There can be no service of God in Babylon; His house must be built at Jerusalem. The great thoughts of God, taken up in our affections, will liberate us from what is Babylonish and what is sectarian, or what is marked by independency.

Jerusalem and the house of God, as applied spiritually to ourselves, represent what is universal. There are great spiritual realities existent today which are to be recognised by faith and love, and as they are recognised the people of God move away from captivity into liberty. Jesus has died that "he should also gather together into one the children of God who were scattered abroad". As born of God His children are one family, and they are all indwelt by one Spirit in whose power they are all baptised into one body. Christ has formed Jew and gentile in Himself into one new man, and in Him "all the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also" (gentiles) "are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit". So that believers who are of the gentiles are "joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings". Those born of God, who receive Christ by believing on His name, have part in common in the wondrous results of the death of Christ; they have all received the same Holy Spirit; and through Christ they have all access by one Spirit to the Father. But all this belongs to Jerusalem; it cannot be known or enjoyed in Babylon. Babylon is the current system of religion according to which the children of God and those who are of the world join together in what is supposed to be the service of God. But everything that is of God is brought into captivity in such a system. Those who are of the world cannot join, except in a most unreal way, in utterances that would be suitable for the children of God. And the children of God who are happy in His love and favour cannot feel that language which expresses the experience of distance and unsuitability to God is fitting for them to use. It is impossible for the world lying in the wicked one and the sons of God accepted in Christ to take common ground before God. To attempt to do so is to bring all that is of God into bondage. The divine nature finds its liberty in conditions of holiness, truth, love, divine order and

spirituality. But these things are found in Jerusalem, not in Babylon. How could the heavenly character of the assembly or the truth of Christ's Headship be known in an earthly system? How could the saints be together as the brethren of Christ, or in the conscious joy of sonship before God, in a system of things which keeps them on the ground of being men in the flesh? All the principles which govern the fellowship of saints, the truth of the assembly, and its divine order and functioning as set forth in 1 Corinthians and in the epistles to Timothy, are all unknown in what answers to Babylon today. For all that is connected spiritually with God's name, and with the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must leave Babylon and come to Jerusalem. Divine order and worship in spirit and truth cannot be found in any human system. They cannot be taken up in any sectarian or independent position. These things stand connected with Jerusalem and the house; they will only be understood as the people of God use their liberty to return from Babylonish captivity.

No doubt there is spiritual wealth in Babylon at the present time, and many precious vessels that really belong to the house of God, but they are enriching and adorning the wrong city. They are not available for service there. They are all wanted for the house at Jerusalem, but to get them there God has to stir up the spirits of His people. "And the chief fathers of Judah and Benjamin rose up, and the priests, and the Levites, even all those whose spirit God had stirred, to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is at Jerusalem". The "chief fathers" would be those who are prepared to carry responsibility. Without such persons there can be no effective movement. Many have enough light to know that they are not where they ought to be, but they shrink from responsibility in the matter, and remain in captivity. It is requisite that a spiritual lead should be given, and we can thank God that it has been given. None of us now has to step out on an untrodden path; we, like the Hebrews, have had spiritual leaders who have spoken to us the word of God, and who by their faith have marked out the path of liberty, and where the service of God can go on according to His mind. We might become acquainted with such if we are interested, and we might perhaps find some in our own locality who are moving in the direction of Jerusalem and the house of God. It is well to seek the company of such, and to move with them.

Priests and levites were found amongst those who went up, which brings out the fact that the service of God was in view. It would be essential in any movement of recovery today that there should be priestly and levitical elements present. That is, consideration for God and a readiness to take up spiritual labour in relation to His service, and for the good of His people. We may find these elements today, perhaps in persons not of much account in this world.

"And king Cyrus brought forth the vessels of the house of Jehovah ... by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine-and-twenty knives, thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand four hundred. The whole did Sheshbazzar bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem". The vessels of service now are persons, the gold representing what the saints are as subjects of the work of God, and the silver speaking of what they are as standing in the value of a divine redemption. The saints are very precious vessels as wrought of God and carrying the features and qualities of new creation. It is possible for us to set aside in our minds all that we are naturally, or according to the flesh, and think of ourselves according to what we are by the grace and work of God. We then arrive at a true thought of what we are as vessels of gold. Then we may think of ourselves as redeemed ones, having our place before God in Christ as the fruit of that great redemption which He has accomplished on the cross. We shall become God's righteousness in Him eternally on the ground that He has been made sin for us. The thought of redemption brings into relief all that was accomplished when our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for us. It is due to Him that we should be silver vessels for the service of the house of God.

Then we should gather that "chargers" and "basons" would be fairly large vessels, and they would suggest great capacity for the service of God. Why should we be content to be small vessels? Why not pray for enlargement that God may be more worthily served? Surely we should all desire this. 2 Timothy goes along with this, and contemplates the vessels as being "sanctified" and "serviceable". How careful we should be to preserve ourselves so that nothing shall be allowed that would unfit us for the holy service of the house of God! The vessels were all counted out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah; as of the royal line he was the one best fitted to take charge of them. He may be looked at as a type of Christ, but I think generally in this book he is viewed as taking a lead in the responsible service, and that he would represent princely features in the saints rendering them able to take up a divine trust. The "basons" of gold and silver referred to appear to have been dishes with covers (see 1 Chronicles 28: 17 and note); this would suggest that there are times when the saints have to hold themselves as covered vessels. The contaminations of the world have to be carefully excluded. But in actual service in the house the covers would be removed. We do not expect that a brother will cover up in the assembly what he has in his heart. It is the time then for the covers to be taken off so that God may be served and the saints helped in their approach

to Him by what a brother has. Many keep the covers on when they should be taken off, and God is robbed of what is His due, and the worship suffers generally by something being covered up in the heart that ought to be brought into view. It is possible for what may be thought to be modesty and a retiring spirit to put a vessel of service out of action in the house of God. Let us see to it that the covers are not on when they should be off!

EZRA 2

Ezra 2

We have seen that Jerusalem and the house of God represent what is universal, and cannot possibly be connected with what is sectional or sectarian, or what may be attached to some particular nation. All saints are called to blessing in Christ, and as having received one Spirit they are one body. They are all partakers of the heavenly calling and are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. The whole circle of what is spiritual is marked by unity. I think every true believer would admit this.

But in chapter 2 different localities are brought distinctly into view: "every one to his city" (verse 1); "all Israel in their cities" (verse 70). We know that some of the names mentioned in verses 3 to 35 are names of cities, and it is probable that they all are, or, if individuals, that they are viewed as characterising certain localities. So that this chapter, viewing the people in their cities, suggests the thought of the saints as found in local assemblies. As we come in our souls to the great spiritual realities which are universal, we come under obligation to work them out in some practical way in the localities where God has placed us. We realise that we must walk with our brethren locally in the recognition of the great matters which have become known to us as the truth of God, and which, by His grace, we esteem more highly than anything else. Our hearts have been stirred up by God to value what is of Himself. We should all be exercised that this shall be a reality to us — that we have not simply drifted into certain associations because our parents were there, or a few other people that we like, or even because we got some blessing there. We might have got some blessing at a church or a chapel, but that would not make it Jerusalem or the house of God. We have to learn what is of God from the Scriptures, and as divinely taught, and then be set to work it out with others who value it as we do in the locality where we live.

It should be a definite thing with us that we have something before us that is universal in character. We shall then not be occupied unduly with persons, though we shall greatly value those who help us in the apprehension of the great thoughts of God. But we shall not be turned aside from pursuing those thoughts even if we see others failing to do so. If I feel disappointed with some of those who are available to walk with, I should consider that it is very possible that they might have reason sometimes to be disappointed with me! But however this may be, let us not get away from the great thoughts of God — the great realities of God. If we have Jerusalem and the house before us we shall find that there are others who think of these things, and who love them,

and desire to follow them up as much as we do. These great things are not known in Babylon; they could not be known there. God has been pleased to put them amongst a poor and afflicted people, of no account in the world, because He wishes to attract hearts purely to what is of Himself, and not to what has importance in the eyes of men. Is it not an immense favour to be permitted to walk with a few feeble saints whose only attraction or importance is that they value the precious things of God, and seek to be in practical accord with what He has taught them? Saints can walk together on that principle, in separation from all that is unrighteous, and all that which is inconsistent with the truth of God is unrighteous. There can be no liberty to carry on the service of God in these last days save as we withdraw from what is not right, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But this has to be worked out in each locality where we are found by the ordering of God. We are all children of some place, even as we read of some in this chapter that they were "children of Bethlehem", "children of Jericho", and of others that they were "men of Netophah", "men of Anathoth", "men of Bethel and Ai", and so on. We are all set in localities where we have to maintain with our fellow saints what is in accord with the mind of God. What Paul writes in 1 Corinthians is expressly said to be "the Lord's commandment", and it is addressed to "all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ". It is the mind of God that the great truth of that epistle should be worked out practically in every locality where saints are found.

The different classes referred to in Ezra 2 — priests, levites, singers, doorkeepers, Nethinim — represent different kinds of service which are essential if the house of God is to be set up according to the divine order. It is for each one to be exercised to know what he or she is called to be or to do. Some services require greater spirituality than others, or a greater degree of spiritual power, and while we ought all to desire to serve in the best possible way, we should be careful not to attempt to take up a service for which we are not spiritually qualified. To be one of the Nethinim was to be in a subordinate position, but it would be better to serve acceptably in that position, as called of God to do so, than to attempt to fill a higher position without being qualified to do so. The apostle would have this in mind when he says, "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all in possession of miraculous powers? have all gifts of healings? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" 1 Corinthians 12: 29, 30. That is to say, You must not think that you can be what you like; you must accept the divine grading in service, even while desiring earnestly the greater gifts. The gifts referred to in 1 Corinthians 12: 28 - 30 are not conferred with the object of making the persons prominent

who have them, though in a certain sense they do this. They are set by God in the assembly on His own account, that He may be made prominent in the assembly. They are really representative of God, and stand connected with His dwelling here in His assembly which is His house.

It is very helpful to go carefully through the first epistle to the Corinthians, and observe how the thought of what is universal runs through it. For example, "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (chapter 1: 9) is clearly a universal fellowship. No one could think of it being merely local. The calling of God, the foundation, Jesus Christ, laid by Paul, the temple of God, the communion of the blood of the Christ and of His body, the baptism by one Spirit into one body, the assembly as that in which God has set the gifts mentioned in chapter 12: 28, are all universal thoughts. They are connected in that sense with Jerusalem, but they are all brought to bear upon the local assembly in Corinth, and in every place where there might be an assembly of saints, so that in our various "cities" we are continually governed by the thought of what is universal as set forth in Jerusalem. The thought of independent local assemblies is entirely foreign to Scripture, and has been much used by Satan to neutralise the Spirit's ministry of the truth of the assembly as the body of Christ and the house of God. All Israel dwelt "in their cities", but their thoughts all centred in Jerusalem and in the house of Jehovah. If our local position is not governed by truth and principles which are universal, we are sure to become independent, and to lose sight of what is vital to the present testimony of God. Let us all see to it that we begin by considering first for God and for His house, and that His worship may really go on in spirit and truth.

It is well to be reminded that all assembly administration is local. Discipline upon evil, fellowship meetings, and arrangements in regard of ministry are all matters of local assembly administration. There is great scope for the activity of love in these and other matters as taken up on the principle of local responsibility.

There were certain amongst those who returned who "could not shew their fathers' house, nor their seed, whether they were of Israel". And some of the priests "sought their genealogical register, but they were not found; therefore were they, as polluted, removed from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim". There had been culpable carelessness about the fundamental principle on which the people held their inheritance from God, or on which priestly services could be rightly rendered to God. Seventy years in Babylon — to say nothing of the sad state which had

preceded the captivity — had weakened the thought of the inheritance and the thought of priestly privilege in their hearts. They had not thought it worth while to keep up their genealogical registers, on which all depended, whether for an Israelite or a priest. They had really become profane in their thoughts, like Esau; they did not attach value to the greatest privileges that man favoured of God in that day could enjoy. It is sad to think that this may have its counterpart today. If we do not value the inheritance or the priesthood sufficiently to keep up the condition in which alone they can be enjoyed, we lose title to them in a practical sense. Not that God's thoughts change or fail, but if we cease to value them we lose title to them in our own consciousness. It is not said that these people were not of Israel, but that they could not show whether they were of Israel. In God's mind the genealogy of each of them was perfectly known, but *they* could not show it. This was the sad result of a prolonged course of indifference to the most precious divine giving that was known in that day. The "prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus" is not to be won by careless or spiritually lazy persons. The inheritance will not be enjoyed by those who do not appreciate it. One serious result of being in Babylon is that persons lose interest in the portion of the saints in light; they mind earthly things; and when things come to be examined in the light of Jerusalem they have no divinely attested pedigree. A large number of those who profess to be christians can only be regarded as doubtful cases. We prove our genealogy today by departing from iniquity, and following righteousness, faith, love, peace with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

It was true also of certain of the children of the priests that they could not find their genealogical register. "Therefore were they, as polluted, removed from the priesthood". How many of God's priests today have been so careless about their priesthood and service that, in a practical sense, they have forfeited their title! How many have, in a practical sense removed themselves from the priesthood: many are in associations which render them incapable of serving in a priestly way. But they are all wanted for the service of the house of God, and there is a beautiful suggestion in this scripture that even such persons may have their priestly title restored. If a priest stands up with Urim and with Thummim everything will be divinely discerned, and every true priest will be set at liberty to "eat of the most holy things". Is it not our joy to know that such a Priest has stood up? In a coming day God's earthly people will be utterly unable to establish any title to blessing on their side. They will have no genealogies, or if they had,

they would be worthless to secure them the fulfilment of the promises. They will have to bless themselves in Christ; Psalm 72: 17. They will only have hope or title because their rejected Messiah has died for them, and lives again to be

the security of all those blessings which they have forfeited by their unbelief. Priesthood will be seen to attach to Christ, and only those will be priests whom He discerns to be kindred with Him. The priests of that coming day will be clothed with righteousness and salvation, and Christ will own them as His. It is not otherwise today; none are priests but those whom Christ owns to be such. The lights and perfections of God in the breastplate of Christ make sure the title of every true priest. If He does not account me a priest, no human ordination can make me one. But if He has made me a priest to His God and Father (Revelation 1: 6) the Urim and the Thummim can only confirm what He has done. No one is entitled to "eat of the most holy things" who has not had to do personally with Christ and been accredited by Him. This raises a very necessary exercise amongst those who have returned from captivity. Those not accredited by Christ can only be regarded as "polluted". If He is our only title to blessing, if He is our righteousness and salvation, if we are morally separate from the world and the flesh, if we are marked by spiritual features, the Urim and the Thummim will confirm our priestly title. But who would care, or dare, to exercise the privileges of a priest without being sure that Christ had approved him as such? If I am not sure whether I am a priest or not, I must go to the Priest with Urim and Thummim. He will delight to assure me so that no uncertainty may remain in my heart. The all-important question is, How does Christ regard me? If He has made me a priest, and owns me as a priest, I must henceforth with holy care hold myself as a priest, and feed as a priest, and serve as a priest. The lesson of this passage is that among those who return from captivity there may be doubtful cases which can only be cleared up by having personally to do with Christ. If I am uncertain I cannot do anything with liberty. But all uncertainty can be ended by going to Christ. For if I am "polluted" He can show me what the pollution is, and He can cleanse me from it, or enable me to cleanse myself. He can give me priestly fitness for holy service, and make me conscious that He has given it to me, so that I may take up the service of God in purity and liberty. None of us can be assured of priestly fitness save by having to do with Christ. And who that loves Him would wish to be anything, or to do anything, that was not confirmed by Him? It is surely our way of holiness and joy to have to do with the Priest with Urim and with Thummim.

Then our genealogy is shown amongst the brethren by our walk and ways and spirit and by serving in love. Demetrius was one who had established his genealogy, for he had "witness borne to him by all, and by the truth itself; and we also", says John, "bear witness, and thou knowest that our witness is true". Diotrephes could not have shown any divine genealogy. The brethren are all the time taking account of what they see in us. If they see spiritual features in

us they know our genealogy. There are some who remain doubtful for a long time; some break bread for years without giving much evidence that they have the Spirit. We should be more concerned to show our genealogy in a practical way. We judge young people more by what we see in them than by what they say. If they find pleasure in being with the saints, and are interested in what they hear in the meetings, and like to read what is spiritually helpful, and are not ashamed to confess Christ, they are showing their genealogy. Reading is a great test both for young and old; what we find pleasure in reading shows what our minds are after.

"And some of the chief fathers, when they came to the house of Jehovah which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in its place. They gave after their ability to the treasure of the work sixty-one thousand darics of gold, and five thousand pounds of silver, and one hundred priests' coats". We must not think that the house of God can be built without some sacrifice on our part. What are we prepared to give that God may have a dwelling and be expressed here? I do not refer to gifts of money, though that may have place in it. What am I able to bring in moral contribution to the house? If I can bring evidence that God, as known in grace and love, has a great place in my heart, and my desire is that He shall be expressed here, and worshipped here, I am known in heaven as a contributor to the house of God. This means that what is of the flesh has been brought down: the pride and vanity that made self so important have been reduced; God, known as revealed in Christ, has become my joy and boast. I am now to walk worthy of God so that He may be expressed here, and not the wretched features of the flesh.

The chief fathers provided "one hundred priests' coats". Their exercise was that there should be suitability in the priests for the holy service of God. The priests' coats are often lacking. Without the "beauty of holiness" God's priests are not suitably attired, and they discredit any service which they may profess to render. Paul is concerned about the priests' coats when he says, "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us purify ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear", 2 Corinthians 7: 1. It is most important that those who have returned from Babylon today should not be content with an outward position of separation, but that they should be marked by a holiness which is suitable for the service of the house of God.

EZRA 3

Ezra 3

The "seventh month" speaks of recovery. The passover, the feast of unleavened bread and the feast of weeks stood in relation to the beginning of the year, but the holy convocations of the seventh month were "at the turn of the year". They have typical reference to God's future ways in recovering Israel after long centuries of departure. And they contain instruction for us in this day when God is graciously reviving His precious truth in many hearts. The seventh month began with "a memorial of blowing of trumpets" (Leviticus 23: 24), speaking of a special sounding forth of testimony for the calling together of God's people in relation to Himself. And in the scripture before us we read that "the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem", Ezra 3: 1. A sense of their unity as God's people was brought into their hearts, and a sense, also, that Jerusalem was the place where Jehovah had set His name, and where He would be approached and served. Any really helpful testimony amongst the people of God today will engage them with what they have in common. They can only approach God in one way. There was but one "altar of the God of Israel", and the first thought of the returned remnant was to build that altar. They desired to set up the offering service "as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God". They thought first of what was due to God according to His original order. In the application of this to ourselves, the coming to Jerusalem signifies that we come to what is universal — to God's great thoughts for all His saints. But we cannot have those wondrous thoughts before us without being concerned that our approach to God should correspond with them. The altar is "the altar of burnt-offering for Israel", 1 Chronicles 22: 1.

They were only a small remnant returned from captivity, but the service of God was before them as it had been "written in the law of Moses". Their minds reverted to the beginning of their dispensation, and to that which had divine authority, and in a day of general departure we have to return to what has been spoken by the Lord through our apostles.

It is evident that the altar must be built before there can be offering upon it. And Joshua and Zerubbabel represent the priestly and royal qualities in saints which are essential to the building of the altar. I understand this to speak of the setting up amongst the saints of a definite apprehension of Christ in His ability to sustain all that is sacrificial. What was "written in the law of Moses" showed the necessity for sacrifice, that God's glory might be met, and His people set free to approach Him. But approach to God by sacrifice requires

that Christ shall be known in altar character. The altar presents a very full thought of the kind of humanity seen in Christ which qualified Him to bear all that was before His spirit in Gethsemane, and all that He endured on the cross. He was able to drink the cup which the Father gave Him, to sustain the judgment of God, and to annul the power of death.

The building of the altar, in its application to us, would consist in the truth of Christ as "the holy one of God" being set up in spiritual power in our souls. Apart from this there can be no true offering, no real service of God. So that what John speaks of as "the doctrine of the Christ" (2 John) is of vital importance; he that abides not in it has not God. A divine Person — the eternal I AM come in flesh, and having resurrection power in Himself, could alone be the altar. So that when truth was being recovered, and the service of the house of God was in view, the first essential was a right thought of Christ. Every spiritual element in saints would lead them to put this first. The spiritual leaders of a hundred years ago were marked by an intense jealousy in regard to the perfection of Christ's holy Person, and the blessedness of His relations as Man with God. The enemy sought to attack this, and hence a conflict arose about the middle of the last century the effect of which was to bring into prominence the true doctrine of Christ, and to establish the principle that it was unrighteous and unholy to have fellowship with those who held and taught what was contrary to it. It ought to have been obvious to all that uncompromising separation from error as to Christ was the only divine course, and none should have thought of evading the responsibility of taking this course. I believe the exercise as to Christian fellowship being absolutely exclusive of any unholy thought of Christ answered to the building of the altar in the day of assembly recovery. It was, indeed, an essential matter, for nothing will be right, or acceptable to God, that has not as its basis a true thought of Christ.

The returned remnant counted on the altar being a protection to them. I think they must have read what Ezekiel had written many years before as to the altar being the "mount of God" and the "lion of God". (See notes to Ezekiel 43: 15, 16.) "And they set the altar on its base; for fear was upon them because of the people of the countries" (verse 3). They felt that to maintain their relations with Jehovah by His altar was the best security against every adverse power. In times of pressure, when there is much that might bring fear upon the people of God, our great concern should be to go on with the service of God. Christ magnified in our hearts as the altar, and presented continually to God in burnt-offering character, will be a defence for us whatever fears or foes assail us.

The offerings referred to here (verses 2 - 5) were burnt-offerings; that is, they were offerings for acceptance. "At the entrance of the tent of meeting shall he present it, for his acceptance before Jehovah ... and it shall be accepted for him — to make atonement for him ... an offering by fire to Jehovah of a sweet odour", Leviticus 1:3,4; Leviticus 1:9. The burnt-offerings in Ezra 3 typify recovery to a sense of acceptance before God. This has been a striking feature of the work of God in these last days. For many centuries the grace of God was obscured by thoughts which were of men; Paul's gospel was practically unknown; so that even converted persons were kept in darkness and bondage under law, and, as to their own consciousness, still in the flesh. Few knew what it was to be in the liberty of grace, as being permanently before God in the fragrance of Christ as the Burnt-offering. Consequently the public worship retained all — even true believers — on the ground of sinners needing forgiveness and looking to have it through the merits and sin-bearing of Christ. But this left souls on the ground of what they were as in the flesh. There was no thought of an entirely new place and acceptance before God according to Christ and in the sweet savour of His offering.

The Reformation brought in a measure of divine light, chiefly as to justification by faith, but all can see in the fixed services even of the reformed bodies how little place is given to the thought of acceptance. Sins are confessed, and forgiveness sought, and absolution is pronounced, but no utterances are provided for the worshippers which express the joy of conscious acceptance. Indeed, Paul's doctrine of what the saints are in Christ Jesus does not enter into the service.

We know from what was "written in the law of Moses" that the burnt-offering might be a bullock, a sheep or goat, or a fowl (Leviticus 1). Of these, that "of the herd and of the flock" was the full, or normal, offering. It was a divine typical presentation of Christ in the vigour of His holy manhood, the altogether perfect and unblemished One, whose inward being could be laid bare, and each separate characteristic of His humanity could be searchingly examined without the discovery of anything that came short of absolute perfection under the eye of God. Each part of what He was inwardly, as well as each movement in His walk, answered perfectly to every requirement and delight of God. The offerer enters into every detail of that holy life which was offered up for him. He sees it all tested by the holy fire of God, and yet, as thus tested, nothing was yielded to God but "sweet odour". And all is seen to be for the acceptance of the offerer. The thought of his sin being covered is not left out of the type, for it is said, "to make atonement for him". It is clearly recognised that the offerer has no acceptance in himself; his offering is accepted for him. He identifies himself with the perfection of his offering, and the sweet odour that

has gone up to God is for him, and, indeed, for all saints. It is a blessed reality that God would have every believer to know this in his own spiritual experience. As offering up burnt-offerings we identify ourselves before God with the perfection of Christ, and with the sweet odour which that perfection has yielded to God when searched by His holy fire. This wondrous thought of acceptance has been made good in the faith of many hearts during the last hundred years. And wherever it has been made good by the Spirit it has given approach to God an entirely different character from what is common in the christian profession. It corresponds with the burnt-offerings of the returned remnant in Ezra 3. It is a return, by divine grace, to the original thought of God in this present period.

Christ has "delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour", so that we can now present Him to God as the One who is accepted for us. What a shining of divine favour this is! We could not possibly have a better acceptance. He said at a most touching moment, "This is my body which is for you", and that included in its wondrous meaning all that was set forth in the burnt-offering. His entire devotion to God is given for us. As being consciously before God in the value of what Christ has offered we can bring His holy worth to God as that in which we are accepted. This character of approach was well known to the apostles, and to those who learned from them; it glorifies God and magnifies the Lord Jesus Christ and fills the worshippers with profound spiritual joy. But the light and joy of all this are found with those who have returned to Jerusalem, and set up the altar; it will never be known in Babylon. It is a fact that *acceptance* is almost an unknown word in the religious world. But every believing soul should be filled with desire to approach God where the sweet odour of Christ as the Burnt-offering goes up from hearts united in the joy of conscious acceptance in Him. This characterises the worship of the returned remnant today.

All this was previous to the house being built, for we read, "But the foundation of the temple of Jehovah was not yet laid" (verse 6). Saints may be happy in conscious acceptance, and yet need the truth of the assembly as the house and temple of God to be built up in their souls to qualify them to take their place in it intelligently. But if we have a true thought of Christ as the Altar, and the consciousness of acceptance in the sweet odour of His delivering Himself up for us, we have liberty Godward, and we are free to receive instruction, and to take up exercise, as to assembly order and service. The material is there which can be built up.

The building of the house in Ezra is typical of what is accomplished by the responsible service of those who labour in the work of God. It is not the

assembly viewed as built by Christ, but as the result of spiritual labour on the part of His servants. It lays stress on what may be accomplished by the service of those who have returned from captivity. The building may be furthered by diligence, or it may be hindered by selfish ease, or carried through to completion through the stimulus of the prophetic word. It rests with us to secure the material and to carry on the building; if we are not diligent in this matter the house will not be built. When I say 'we', I include all who are responsible to be builders, and no christian can decline responsibility in this matter. Paul says, "According to the grace of God which has been given to me, as a wise architect, I have laid the foundation, but another builds upon it. But let each see how he builds upon it", 1 Corinthians 3: 10. The saints are "God's building", but He uses the labour of His servants to bring to pass what is in His mind. The building of God's house, as seen in Ezra, is brought about by spiritual labour in a day of recovery. It typifies the building which is going on today. No labour can be too great to secure the divine thoughts. The work of the Lord today includes service in the gospel, for its object is to secure material for the house, and it includes feeding babes in Christ that they may grow up to spiritual manhood, and it includes bringing saints into separation from unrighteousness and leading them to call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. All this enters into responsible service, though we know well that it will only be effected by the grace and work of God. The house of God can be built with such material as that. It is the "cedar-trees from Lebanon"; it comes from a morally elevated region.

It is the first concern of all true builders to have suitable material, for the house of God cannot be built of natural material. Jesus Christ must be in the soul, or there is nothing to build on, but the builder must take heed that what he adds will correspond with that foundation. It is only as saints are available that any building can be done, for it is through their being built up and built together by spiritual ministry that the house where God is served according to His pleasure comes into being as a spiritual reality. It is only such as are consciously "in Christ" that are suitable material for that house, but even when the material is secured much spiritual labour is needed to complete the house, and to furnish its service according to God's mind. The thought of a spiritual house where God dwells, and where He is served according to His pleasure, has to be built up in souls.

Those who had come out of the captivity "appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to superintend" (or 'set forward' as in the note) "the work of the house of Jehovah" (verse 8). The workmen also were superintended (verse 9). The whole thing was under priestly and spiritual direction, and carried out levitically. In such a matter human and natural

thoughts could have no place; the house was "the house of God", and therefore everything must be as He would have it. This is the great exercise for us today: that there shall be no innovations, no expedients, nothing that is of the devising, or the inadvertence of the human mind, but that God shall have a house which answers to His mind, and where He is served in a way that gives Him pleasure.

Our chapter does not carry us beyond the foundation of the temple of Jehovah being laid. A beginning was made, with the true thought in view. This may not appear to be much outwardly, but to make a beginning according to God is very great spiritually, for it is the evidence that God is with His people, and that His word and His Spirit are with them; Haggai 2: 4, 5. However small it is, it is infinitely better than to be going on with formalities, or even earnest services, which are according to men's thoughts of how God should be served. Indeed, it is most interesting to see that laying the foundation of the house gave occasion for most blessed features of the divine service to appear, "according to the directions of David king of Israel" (verse 10). Those directions gave the full thought of God as to His service, so far as it is developed in the Old Testament, and when the foundation of the house was laid in a day of recovery the builders had nothing less than this before them. They did not wait until the house was completed. As soon as they *began* to labour for the house and service of God, they had the full thought in view, and He granted them a holy and happy experience of it.

"And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah, they set the priests in their apparel, with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise Jehovah according to the directions of David king of Israel. And they sang alternately together in praising and giving thanks to Jehovah. For he is good, for his loving-kindness endureth for ever toward Israel" (verses 10, 11). There is precious instruction for us, and great encouragement, in this. For it shows that when we move practically in the direction of securing a place for the service of God, the Spirit of God at once leads us to think of Christ in relation to that service. He comes before us as the true David, the One under whose hand the whole service of song is ordered. We read in 1 Chronicles 25: 2 of "the sons of Asaph under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied at the direction of the king", and in verse 6 it is said that "All these were under the direction of their fathers Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman, for song in the house of Jehovah, with cymbals, lutes and harps, for the service of the house of God, under the direction of the king". This corresponds with the last clause of Ezra 3: 10 which reads "according to the directions of David king of Israel". It suggests that they were near to David, under his direction, literally 'at his hand', and thus available for

the holy service. It is our privilege to stand thus in relation to Christ as Head — not, in this connection, under His authority as Lord, but at His hand so as to be with Him in the service of praise Godward.

David was "the sweet psalmist of Israel"; he struck the key note for all the praises of Israel; every pious Israelite would feel that what David voiced in praise was suitable for him to sing. Now the Spirit of God would lead us to give Christ that place, for His own utterance by the prophetic Spirit was, "in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee", Psalm 22: 22. It is wonderful that He should take such a place, as having glorified God in bearing the judgment due to sin, and being able to declare God's name to His brethren. He voices the praise that is suitable in God's house, and *His* praise is the true and full measure of what is proper there. Anything out of harmony with His praise is unsuitable for the assembly in the midst of which He sings. Only those who are *at His hand* can sing suitably now.

"The priests in their apparel" represent the saints as set before God in the value of what Christ has accomplished, standing consciously in His worth and favour, and exercised to worship in the beauty of holiness. This is essential to any true service in the house of God, and the "trumpets" which the priests have would indicate that the service may be furthered by spiritual ministry. The precious thoughts of God being brought freshly to us may have a most stimulating effect on the service. And the levites with cymbals indicate a ready response to what is ministered. It could not be the divine thought that any spiritual ministry in the assembly should fall flat, without calling forth a glad response. The saints, as spiritually formed, answer to every divine thought that is presented to them.

There is a counterpart in their affections to what sounds forth from the trumpets. How delightful it is when some precious thought of God is set before the saints, and it finds a ready response in suitable praise and worship! "And they sang alternately together in praising and giving thanks to Jehovah". This is imitated in the formal services of christendom, but it is only found in reality where suitable conditions obtain, and the headship of Christ is known. Heart answering to heart, and voice to voice, so that what is expressed by one is answered to, and added to, by another! So that, without any formally ordered service, there is delightful order and harmony in the service of praise. And all blends to celebrate what God is in His goodness and loving-kindness, and in the whole counsel of His love with regard to those whom He has blessed in Christ.

In our day where there has been a true desire to serve God according to His pleasure in His assembly He has given His saints much enlargement of heart in

His great thoughts of love, and notes of praise have been sounded such as were not heard during long centuries of the church's history. Something of the true character of assembly service and worship has come into evidence, even though in limited and feeble conditions. There is opportunity now to praise the Lord according to the excellencies in which He would have the assembly to know Him. And we may be sure that it is a very great joy to Him still to find a few hearts in the midst of whom He can sing praise to God. And saints can still, as the brethren of Christ, know that His Father is our Father, and His God our God. They can unitedly cry, Abba, Father, in conscious worship. Where such precious realities are known and enjoyed there is a revival of true assembly service, and it is a marvellous contrast to what is known in the christian profession generally. It is well to recognise that the Spirit of God in Ezra had in mind the very conditions and spiritual privileges that are present now even in a day of much outward weakness.

"And all the people shouted with a great shout to the praise of Jehovah, because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid". This was the true note for the occasion, for it was a day of revival and of divine favour. The weeping with a loud voice on the part of the ancient men that had seen the first house (verse 12) was not in the current of the mind of God at that moment any more than the weeping in Nehemiah 8: 9. There was, indeed, much to make them conscious of weakness in themselves, and outwardly it was a "day of small things". But, notwithstanding this, a beginning had been made of something for God, and the service of praise was going on according to David's direction. It was not a time, according to faith, for weeping, but for praising God. The weepers may not have intended to discourage the builders, but their weeping was the result of their feeling that the work then going on was "as nothing". God, addressing these very people, said, "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?" Haggai 2: 3. They could not see the spiritual greatness of what was going on; they could only see a "day of small things" and they despised it. They were not occupied with the loving-kindness which the singers were celebrating. They seemed to have pious regard for the past, and commendable feelings, but the result of their weeping was that a mixed impression was conveyed, in which nothing could be clearly discerned. This is always a mark of Satan's work, even when true saints become instrumental in furthering it. In this case an element was introduced which formed no part of the service as instituted "according to the directions of David king of Israel". And it tended to discourage the builders by making it appear that what they were doing was "as nothing". This is just what Satan would have had them to

think. It was a most effective way of weakening their hands. It was the first manifestation of unbelief in the returned remnant.

God met this discouraging influence by a thrice-repeated call to "be strong". "But now be strong, Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work: for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts. The word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit, remain among you: fear ye not ... I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts ... . The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts", Haggai 2: 4 - 9. God cheered the builders of that day with the thought of the house being finished and filled with glory, and that "the latter glory" of the house should be greater than the former. He would have His people to work in view of His thought as to the house being brought to completion. This is what God would have before us. He would have us to regard the building of His house as a progressive matter going on to completion. He spoke to the returned remnant through Zechariah of the headstone being brought forth "with shoutings: Grace, grace unto it!" The headstone is the completion of the building. He said, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; and his hands shall finish it", Zechariah 4: 7 - 9. This, of course, has reference to Christ, but it suggests, in principle, that every one who begins to build in connection with God's house is to have in view the completion of what he has begun. Whenever there is a beginning made to secure what is for the glory and pleasure of God it brings before Him the thought of it being brought to completion. As we think of this we are encouraged to go on with the building. It is a progressive work all the time; there is always something being added. We look for this every week; something added that is of God, and of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. As this proceeds, we move on constructively; we do not look back with regret; we look forward to continual increase. This is how spiritual energy is stimulated.

Scriptures in the New Testament present this very clearly "in whom all the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord", Ephesians 2: 21. The complete temple is in view, and the thought of increase leading up to that great result. "Yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ", 1 Peter 2: 5. The building is not looked at either by Paul or Peter as completed, but the work is going on with a view to completion according to what God has in mind. He would have this to be ever before us as a present stimulus. He encouraged and strengthened His builders in Haggai's day by setting before them the thought of His house being filled with glory, and He would have nothing less before us now. It may be that there is,

as yet, only a small beginning. But the thought has been revived in many hearts of the assembly as God's temple and house, where His mind is known and answered to. Now we are to labour incessantly that the full thought of God shall be reached in grace and in spiritual power. He would have the assembly as His house to be filled with glory. That is, with moral and spiritual glory, so that, as it was said, "in his temple doth every one" (or, everything) "say, Glory", Psalm 29: 9. We realise that much work remains to be done if such a result as that is to be brought about, but if we have anything less than this in view we are not really working with God.

If we only look at things externally we shall be like the "ancient men". The present great spiritual revival will be "as nothing" in our eyes. But if we think of what is of God, and for God's pleasure, as being the only thing that has true glory, we shall find that spiritual building is going on today. The precious thoughts of God are being set up in the faith and affections of saints, and as those thoughts take form in our souls by divine grace we shall see more and more the incoming of that glory with which God intends to fill His house. If we have a true thought of 'glory' we shall not fail to discern it when it is present. Christ being magnified as the altar and as the burnt-offering is 'glory'; God getting an increasing place in the hearts of His saints is 'glory'; saints being "under the direction of" Christ for the service of praise Godward is 'glory'. God intends that His house shall be filled with glory. For those who really have God's house before them the glory is coming in all the time. Spiritually it is a day of great things.

EZRA 4 AND 5 AND HAGGAI

Ezra 4; Ezra 5; Haggai 1; Haggai 2

If God opens a great door, and an effectual one, there are sure to be many adversaries, and we see something of their activities in Ezra 4. They came with good words and fair speeches. "We would build with you; for we seek your God, as ye; and we have sacrificed to him since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, who brought us up hither" (verse 2). Spiritual judgment would find such people out, as it was said to the angel of the assembly in Ephesus, "thou hast tried them who say that themselves are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars", Revelation 2: 2. This was at a time when the true apostles had not all gone. Paul also speaks of some at Corinth as "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ", 2 Corinthians 11: 13. What took place at the beginning of the church's history has appeared in the day of revival at the end.

It is a matter of common knowledge that when the Lord revived a spiritual ministry of the truth as to the assembly a counter-revival at once began in which much was made of the 'church' and of antiquity, apostolic succession and sacraments. It was Satan's attempt to nullify what God was doing by setting up again the things by which he had corrupted the christian profession in its early history. All this has to be judged and refused as the work of adversaries. Only true saints know how to build the house of God, or how to serve in it when it is built. "The people of the land" can imitate in a fleshly way what is of God, but they can never bring one living stone into its place in the spiritual house. Their help is to be absolutely refused. "Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house to our God, but we alone will build to Jehovah the God of Israel, as king Cyrus, the king of Persia, has commanded us" (verse 3). We have ever to watch against the natural and the fleshly coming in to contribute something to the work of God. Such an intrusion will certainly spoil the building; it is wood, hay, stubble, which will all be burned when the fire tries it.

When the help of "the people of the land" was refused they came out in their true colours, and "weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building; and they hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia" (verses 4, 5). "The people of the land" have a form of piety, but they represent those who wish to maintain things as they are in the christian profession, and are therefore adverse to any ministry which would build up what is distinctively of God. How many 'counsellors' have been hired to write

books and pamphlets in opposition to what has been brought out from Scripture during the last century! I suppose that every part of the truth which has been brought out by the Spirit of God has been attacked as error, and has had to make its way in face of constant opposition. Many hands have been weakened by these efforts of the adversaries; many have been troubled in building.

But this is only a proof of spiritual decline on the part of the builders, and shows that a love of selfish ease makes them think more of their own comfort than of the house of God. Opposition never really hinders the work of God: it is waning interest on the part of His people that is the true secret of all weakness. The adversaries were persistent, and another king arose who was ready to listen to them, and to give order that the work should cease, but the work ceased because it was no longer the chief interest of those who had been engaged in it. This is brought out clearly in the prophet Haggai, who prophesied in the second year of Darius the king, when the work had been at a standstill for a number of years. "Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that Jehovah's house should be built. And the word of Jehovah came by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you that ye should dwell in your wainscoted houses, while this house lieth waste?" Haggai 1: 2 - 4.

An interval of about fifteen years had transpired during which time no progress had been made in building the house. But when the prophetic word came it made no reference to the external difficulties; it addressed itself to the state of the people, and made manifest the real hindrance to the work. There are always difficulties in the way of anything being done for God, and it is easy quietly to accept them, and to regard them as an indication that we should let things stand as they are. When God's chief interest ceases to be our chief interest some form of self-consideration inevitably comes in. Jehovah speaks of His house lying waste while they dwelt in wainscoted houses. It was very sad that Paul had to say of those about him at Rome, "all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 2: 21), Timothy stood out as a bright exception to this, caring with genuine feeling how the saints got on.

Living in our own things leads to poverty and dissatisfaction. The divine call is to set our heart on our ways; we are to weigh well how things are working with us. Are we really prospering in soul? Or is it such a time with us as is described in Haggai 1:6; Haggai 1:9-11? God would have His people to consider whether they are not giving a good deal of time to things which yield very little. There is a kind of eating which gives no satisfaction, and drinking which adds nothing to the inward man, and we may surround ourselves with

things which bring no warmth to the soul, and what we earn may go into a bag with holes. These are striking figures of the result of seeking our own things. Christians on this line may get through life by the mercy of God, but it is a lean and empty and impoverished life compared with what it might have been.

The divine call is, "Go up to the mountain and bring wood, and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith Jehovah", Haggai 1: 8. God's house cannot be built without material, and the material cannot be got without labour. All true spiritual labour at the present time has the house in view. The preaching of the gospel and all ministry of the word is only carried on intelligently as we see that it is to get material for the house and to build it. Let us make this our great business. It is not easy work to go to the mountain and hew timber, but what could be a greater honour than to do something of which God says, "I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified"? God's great thought is that there may be a company here built together for His pleasure, and amongst whom He is glorified. We are all to be at this great work. If each one who knows something of God's chief interest were to be the means of bringing one other into the truth of God's house, and into practical accord with it, what pleasure God would take in it! It is the same work that began nineteen centuries ago by the labours of the apostles and others, but it has now to be done at a time when christendom is full of bodies which are not for God's pleasure, and in which He is not glorified, for they have not the constitution or the character of His house. Indeed, the religious bodies of today answer to the wainscoted houses of Haggai 1, and it is not difficult to see that as religious buildings get larger and finer the inward spiritual power declines. The Lord had spoken of the temple as His Father's house, but the time came when He had to call it "your house". God had ceased to have pleasure in it, and so it is today. Christians are running to what are really their own houses while God's house lieth waste. And this accounts for the spiritual dearth of which many believers complain. "Ye looked for much, and behold it was little; and when ye brought it home I blew upon it". There is much going on in an outward way, but where are spiritual results? Where do we find the dew of the heavens? Where are the precious things which answer for us to the corn, the new wine and the oil? Is it not time for christians to consider their ways, and to ask why blessing is withholden? We need not go far for the answer; it is "Because of my house that lieth waste, whilst ye run every man to his own house".

What is needed is that we should do as the remnant did in that day. They "hearkened to the voice of Jehovah their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, according as Jehovah their God had sent him, and the people feared

before Jehovah", Haggai 1: 12. As soon as they took this ground the message was sent to them, "I am with you, saith Jehovah". All that is needed on our part is that we should hearken to what God says; that is, be in the spirit of obedience before Him, and fear Him. The moment we take this ground He will be with us, and His presence with His people is their only power. If God is not with us even our efforts to build His house will come to nothing. But if He is with us our spirits will be divinely stirred up, and we shall come and work at the house of Jehovah. It is a notable day when that takes place; the exact day of the month is given. We may be sure that when our hearts are stirred up to come and work at the house it is placed on record in heaven.

Then on the one and twentieth day of the seventh month there was a further prophetic word given to fortify the hearts of the remnant against discouragement; Haggai 2: 1. It would appear that within a month of resuming the building a discouraging influence was found amongst the people. It took the form of contrasting what was then present with the former glory of the house. This is a subtle form of the enemy's work because it seems to rightly make much of a glorious past. But it is evident that the object was to minimise, and even make nothing of, the wonderful revival that was then in movement. In the estimation of faith the fact that it was God's house put upon it a wondrous glory, however feeble might be the outward expression of it at the moment. The widow who cast her two mites into the treasury showed that the house was exceedingly precious to her as God's house notwithstanding its actual state at the time. If we have really seen the former glory of the house we cannot accept that, if God is reviving His work, He has something very inferior in view. We cannot accept that it is a different house now, or that anything less than the full divine thought is to be before us in our building, however feeble we may be in relation to such great thoughts. If we have a right thought of the house we see it as invested with all the glory that originally attached to it, and if God is with us we shall not be prepared to give up any part of what is in His mind.

So there is a thrice-repeated call to "be strong", Haggai 2: 4. If we think that what we are occupied with is "as nothing" we shall be weak indeed, but if we think of God's house, and that He is with us in the building of it, we shall be preserved from fear. "The word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit, remain among you: fear ye not" (verse 5). It is as though God said, 'My thoughts have not changed one bit; I brought you to myself that you might be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, and that you might make me a sanctuary that I might dwell among you, and this is still what I have in my mind'. If God's Spirit remains among us, it is certain that He will never depart from God's original thoughts. Christendom may depart from

them, and we may depart from them, but the Spirit never will. So that now if there is only one stone laid upon another there is something which speaks of, and represents, the whole divine thought. There may be today, perhaps, only two saints in a town or village who recognise in a practical way that they are a constituent part of the house of God, and are set to further the divine building, but there is something which recognises the whole divine thought, and that cannot be "as nothing" in our eyes. Satan would desire that it might be, that we might despise it as a small thing, and give up the practical confession of it and the building of what is suitable to it.

God would have us to know what He thinks of His house. He is going to shake everything with a view to His house being here filled with glory. Every divine shaking at the present time has in view the freeing of what will contribute to His house. We know that there will be a terrible shaking presently to prepare the way for God to bring in the First-begotten into the habitable world, and when He comes in there will be found material that will fill the house with glory. But at the present time there is much precious material in the world, and God claims it all for Himself and for His house. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts" (verse 8). The silver and the gold today are the saints secured for God as the fruit of redemption and as in new creation. "The desire of all nations" (verse 7) refers to everything that is precious and truly desirable in all the nations. It refers to apprehensions and appreciations of Christ brought by the work of God into the hearts of His saints everywhere, so that Christ has become "the preciousness" to them. This is what has value before God, and He intends that it should all come to His house to enrich it with glory. So what God has in mind is not diminishing glory, but increasing glory. "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts" (verse 9). Each brother and sister can bring more of the glory in; it is the divine thought that we should be continually moving "from glory to glory". If God shakes the nations it is with a view to what is precious coming to light as the glory of His house; it is that men and saints may be shaken out of settings that are not suitable to God's house, and brought as contributors of glory to that house.

Then two months later Haggai got another prophetic word, and this time it was a solemn warning against what is unclean. This is just the opposite to acquiring glory, and it seems to suggest that if we are not acquiring features of glory we shall be very likely to become unclean by contact with the uncleanness that is all around us here. The question raised by Jehovah (verses 11 - 13) brought to light that holy things have no power to make holy what is not holy in itself, but what is unclean can quickly impart its own characteristic to anything which it touches. It is a warning against touching what is unclean,

see 2 Corinthians 6: 17. If we want to be suitable to the house of God, and to have features of glory, we must keep from the touch of what is unclean. The people in running to their own houses were really unclean; the state of their hearts in allowing the house of God to lie waste while they pursued their own interests was one of uncleanness, and it brought upon them the severe governmental dealing of God. This is very much the state of the christian profession at the present time.

The four and twentieth day of the ninth month (verse 18) was a notable day, for there was evidently a fresh start made in building, and Jehovah took immediate notice of it. "From this day will I bless you". It is interesting to notice that this was not the first movement they had made. They had begun years before, but there had been a long period of slackness. It is often like this; there is a beginning made, but it is not followed up, and spiritual energy wanes. But God sends a prophetic word and uses it to bring about revival. A fresh start is made, and God immediately answers it by the assurance and bestowal of blessing.

Then on the same day there was a second word given to the prophet, but this time it was addressed to Zerubbabel as typical of Christ. It declared plainly how God would shake everything — the heavens and the earth, the throne of kingdoms and the strength of the kingdoms of the nations — but His object in all this was that Zerubbabel might be made as a signet. That is, God's object is to use Christ as His seal; and to put the impress of Christ on the whole created scene. We are made painfully aware that the nations do not carry the impress of Christ at the present time. They might have done so, for God has sent the gospel into all the creation and if it had been believed it would have brought all who received it under the impress of Christ. But it has not been believed, and hence there must be a terrible shaking to make way for the impress of Christ as God's chosen One. At the present time it is those who have come under the impress of Christ who are suitable to form part of God's house and to build it. But this has to be brought about by the shaking and overthrow of all that belongs to the flesh and to the natural man. As the flesh is judged and refused God can seal us with His chosen signet, and those who are thus sealed can build God's house and can bring glory into it.

There is very definite help for us in these things if we pay attention to them. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah helped the builders in their day. We are told that "the elders of the Jews built; and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo", Ezra 6: 14. But in putting these prophecies on record the Spirit of God had in mind that

they would be a help to us in building the house of God in our remnant times. May we have grace from God to profit by them!

EZRA 6

Ezra 6

The effect of the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah was that Zerubbabel and Jeshua rose up and began to build the house of God, "and with them were the prophets of God, who helped them". They did not wait for the sanction of Darius; they went on with the work as an obligation to which they were called by God, so that even onlookers could see that something was being done. It was reported to Darius the king that "the house of the great God" was "being built with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work is being carried on with diligence, and prospers in their hand", Ezra 5: 8. There is a fairness in this report which does not appear in the letter written to Artaxerxes some years before. When faith moved in relation to the building of the house, God moved providentially to secure favourable conditions for His servants, and He also brought out His mind more fully, and in greater detail, as to the house and its service. The matter being referred to Darius brought to light the original decree of Cyrus when Jehovah charged him to build the house. This was the word of God for the time, for the commandment of the God of Israel and the commandment of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes are identified in chapter 6: 14. No doubt it has been written for our instruction that we may have definitely before us certain things which are to characterise the house of God in a day of recovery like the present.

"Let the house be built for a place where they offer sacrifices" (verse 3). It is well for the youngest believer to know that he is called to be built up along with his brethren as "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ", 1 Peter 2: 5. The apostle Peter would have even "newborn babes" to think of this. Does it not appeal to our hearts when we are assured that we can offer something to God, and that He will be pleased with it? We are part of the holy priesthood; we are not merely spectators of what others offer; each of us is privileged to have part in the offering service.

But this requires that "foundations be solidly laid" (verse 3); which means that Christ alone is to be before us as the One chosen of God and precious. If there were any admixture of self along with Christ nothing could be really *solid*. But "he that believes on him shall not be put to shame. To you therefore who believe is the preciousness". All the preciousness of Christ is for us as the basis of all our relations with God in His house. We are there according to the value and adornment of the chief Corner-stone. The thought of the foundation and the chief Corner-stone are brought together in 1 Peter 2: 6, 7. He blends

Isaiah 28: 16 and Psalm 118: 22. The solidity of what we rest upon is combined with the preciousness and attractiveness to God which are found in Christ. "For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ", 1 Corinthians 3: 11. Paul had laid this foundation in his ministry at Corinth, and any solid building must be on that foundation. Whatever is built upon it must correspond with it or be found worthless. For responsible service in building is before us in the scripture which we are considering; it is what is done by means of the ministry of the word. The first essential for service in building is to be impressed by the fact that Jesus, God's anointed Man, is the foundation. There is to be no thought of building anything on man after the order of Adam; there must be the introduction of Jesus Christ as a foundational matter in the souls of saints. Paul's ministry left no uncertainty as to this.

Then God would impress us with the greatness of His house. "Its height sixty cubits, its breadth sixty cubits". It is noticeable that this is twice the height of Solomon's temple, and three times its breadth. The enlarged dimensions given in the decree of Cyrus suggest that in a day of recovery the Spirit of God will bring out in a special way the greatness of what is in the mind of God. The more it has been departed from, the greater the necessity for magnifying it. As one has said, nothing but the brightest light will do for the darkest day. The "height" speaks of the spirituality which marks the house, the elevated and heavenly character of what is known there, matters far above the level of this world and of the thoughts of men. The "breadth" indicates that every part of the truth must have its place; there must be no picking out of what suits a narrow position; and all the sectarianism must necessarily be narrower than the mind of God. The whole company of saints on earth must be taken account of if we wish to have a right estimate of the greatness of God's house, but they must be viewed from the standpoint of what they are by the calling and work of God, and not according to what they have become through departing from the truth.

"Three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber" give, in a symbolical way, the materials of which the house is built. "Stones" have reference, I believe, to what the saints are by the calling of God. There is fixity and permanence about this, for it is wholly of God, and nothing can invalidate it. The truth of what saints are by divine calling is to be fully maintained in ministry so that God's called ones may learn to regard themselves and their brethren in that light. When the Lord said to Simon, "*thou* shalt be called Cephas (which interpreted is stone)" (John 1: 42), He gave Simon permanently his place as called to be part of the divine building. It is given to us to love and pray for "all the saints", but in doing so we think of them as

subjects of divine calling. One of the evils of christendom is that certain persons are deemed to be worthy to be spoken of as 'saints', whereas the truth is that the whole company of God's elect are saints by divine calling (see Romans 1: 7; 1 Corinthians 1: 2), and this is as addressed in responsibility here, so that now we are all to act "worthily of saints". If we give up our calling as saints — and it is to be feared that many have done so — we shall give up the character of walk that is worthy of saints, and this is just what Satan would wish us to do.

The calling wherewith we have been called includes the truth of "being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone, in whom all the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord; in whom *ye* also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit", Ephesians 2: 20 - 22. This links directly with what we are considering in Ezra. It is not a voluntary or optional matter; it is a calling of which we are to walk worthily. Spiritual building goes on as we seek to enter into the understanding of this, so that we walk with our fellow-saints in the truth of it. God would have all His saints formed in the truth of it, so that they might be fitted to take their places as constituent parts of His house. It is well to ponder all that lies in the region of divine calling. As we spiritually apprehend the great realities into which we are brought by divine calling we shall be far removed in our spirits and in our walk from those very limited and human associations which hold many true saints in spiritual bondage. We shall become "great stones" in God's spiritual house.

Then "a row of new timber" suggests what the saints are morally by God's work of grace in them. We know from chapter 3: 7 that the timber was "cedar-trees from Lebanon". Each tree had its own history and growth, and had to undergo many operations and processes before it came into the condition when it could be placed as "new timber" in the house of God. There is a work of grace, beginning with new birth — which would, perhaps, answer to the planting of the tree — and followed by God giving increase until mature growth is secured. Paul could say, "by the grace of God I am what I am", and we can well understand that every moral feature which made up what Paul was by grace was 'new'. How different it was from everything that marked Saul the persecutor of saints! The "new timber" is what saints have become morally as "under grace", and as taught by grace. It has come to pass that they have taken on, as the result of moral exercises under the reign of grace, a 'new' character which is suitable to adorn the house of God. So, if the 'stones' refer to what God's elect are according to calling and purpose, the "new timber" typifies what they become morally under the sway and teaching of grace. The purpose line and the moral line combine to furnish building

material for the house. Of course both are the work of God, but viewed from different standpoints.

"And let the expenses be given out of the king's house". Nothing in this work of building is at our own charges. As faith and love take on the work it will be found that what is needed is supplied without fail. The golden and silver vessels are restored also. We should look for this, that suitable vessels for holy service should be furnished. The house is not complete without "vessels to honour" being there. To know the truth of the house is not sufficient; we may know much, in a certain way, without being suitable vessels for holy service. But such vessels are essential to the service. So we must pray that they may become available. I have no doubt the gold and silver vessels are in being; they are there potentially, though they may not yet be found actually in the house and in service in a practical sense. It is well that they should know that they are claimed for holy service in the house. Many of them are, alas! still in Babylon, but they cannot render there the service to which they are appointed. Being a "vessel to honour" is conditional upon separating from vessels of dishonour; 2 Timothy 2: 21.

Then all the requirements for sacrificial and offering service were to be given "day by day without fail". In the service of God's house the materials for offering are all divinely furnished. In a certain sense they are furnished in the Scriptures, for the preciousness of Christ Godward is unfolded there to be sought out and known by those who take pleasure in it. Perhaps one of the most wonderful things in the providential ordering of God has been the invention of printing, which has made it possible for every person, in this country at least, to have "the oracles of God". I believe God had in mind in this, not only that men should be saved, but that they should come to the knowledge of the truth connected with His house and service. Men need not be misled; they need not be unfurnished. Then God has also given in these days a spiritual ministry of the truth, which as received into the affections of His people has furnished them with material for offering. If persons are interested immense supplies are available. All that pertains to the service of the house is being supplied "of the king's goods" today. It is being presented in ministry, and is there for the holy priesthood to take up in spiritual grace and power so as to use it in offering service Godward in His house.

The work was brought to completion, and the house finished,

in the sixth year of Darius. I think we have seen what corresponds with this in our own times. No one who has been intelligently observant of God's ways in recovering the truth can doubt that the house of God and its service has been very largely brought before the minds and hearts of saints for many years

past. The great principles of the house and its service have been brought out in spiritual ministry over against all the departure and corruptions that characterise the religious world. And there have been those who, humbly and prayerfully, have sought to take up what has been ministered, and who have desired to have the joy of serving God in His house according to the truth of what He has set up. The truth itself is found amongst the saints now in something like spiritual completeness. There is, perhaps, a good deal to be added yet to fill out the great thought of God, and to "beautify" the house, as we read in the next chapter, but as to the great outstanding features of the house they are present to the faith and love of many hearts in something like completeness. This is not anything to the credit of men; it is purely of God's sovereign mercy, and is to be thankfully acknowledged as such.

The house was not only "built and completed", but it was dedicated "with joy" (verses 16 - 18). The service of offering, which had been long discontinued, was resumed; burnt-offerings were numerous, "and for a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel". It is beautiful to see the blending of exercises which are set forth here in type in connection with the dedication of the house. There is approach to God with joy in the acceptance of Christ, and at the same time a link preserved with all the people of God. It has been, and continues to be, a time of great departure, so that the glory of God can only be connected with His people generally on the ground of the sin-offering. Thousands of believers do not realise that their position and their associations, and even the character of their worship, are so contrary to the will of God, that, as measured by divine holiness, they require a sin-offering. But infinite grace has placed "all Israel" on the ground of the sin-offering, so that God does not bring in judgment on many things which displease Him. He goes on in forbearance because Christ has glorified Him in bearing the judgment due to what He disapproves. We do not forget the departure, but we hold all saints in our affections as identified with the value of the sin offering. The whole purpose of God in regard to them will be carried out eventually on that ground. The service of God can only go on in its full scope as we take all saints into account as being in the mind of God for blessing in Christ. So that all true "spiritual sacrifices" have, in the mind of the offerers, some relation to all God's elect as blessed in Christ. The whole scope of grace and of divine purpose enters into the matter, and God is glorified in the vast range of His actings in love. On this ground priestly and levitical service is carried on.

"And the children of the captivity held the passover upon the fourteenth of the first month" (verse 19). The passover was held now in entirely new conditions, for it was as "the children of the captivity" that they held it. The whole history

of departure and recovering mercy gave a touch to this passover which it had never had before. The house had been built and dedicated in a remnant time and in infinite mercy. No passover before had ever been quite like it. We cannot be intelligent as to God's present ways if we do not realise that assembly privileges and service are taken up now in the light of return from captivity and recovery in mercy. Things cannot be taken up now as if the church was in its original state. We must, like the men of Issachar, have "understanding of the times". It might be said that believers broke bread and enjoyed assembly privileges at the beginning, and we can do the same now. But we need to bear in mind that God has called us at a particular time in assembly history. We have to take things up now as having come out of captivity; we take them up on the ground of what God has restored in sovereign mercy.

We cannot ignore the fact that there has been great departure, and that the principles of the world have corrupted the church, but God has brought a remnant back, and given a precious ministry of His own thoughts as to the assembly and its service. We are not simply going on with the original order, but we take up things now in the light of the great recovery which God has granted. So that a special kind of purity and unity is called for. "The priests and the Levites had purified themselves as one man: they were all pure" (verse 20). The compassions of God which have granted such wondrous recovery become a mighty influence in the direction of purity and unity. No assembly privileges can be rightly taken up today save as in the sense of God's special movements in the last days. It is not now simply what God did at Pentecost and in apostolic days, but what He is doing today after eighteen centuries of church failure. The children of the captivity had a sense of the immediateness of God's actings for them, and of His present support. It was not that they had got back to Solomon's temple, but they were in the presence of God's wondrous actings in their own day. It is not uncommon to find people taken up with what they speak of as 'pentecostal', speaking with tongues and the like, who are profoundly ignorant of what God is doing today. But when God's present movements of recovery are discerned, they lead to purity and unity, and assembly privileges can then be taken up in view of the house of God being the assembly of the living God. That is, it is God as in movement today that is before us, as we get it here, "And the children of Israel that were come back out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves to them from the filthiness of the nations of the land, to seek Jehovah the God of Israel, did eat" (verse 21).

It was Jehovah as known in recovery, and as having a house in remnant times amongst the children of the captivity, that they sought. And they found Him,

for “they kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy; for Jehovah had made them joyful” (verse 22). They had experience that God was with them in the work of His house, and they were pure and separate, as a people must be who have to do with the living God. The feast of unleavened bread required the purging out of all leaven; not a grain of anything left that would inflate, or give importance to, the flesh. Then we can be truly ‘joyful’ for God is before us in His wondrous actings of recovery, and we are true to the unleavened character of His assembly. The truth of the house of God as restored to a faithful remnant must work out in this way. It leads to the spiritual privileges of the assembly being taken up in purity and unity and spiritual joy. For the death of Christ is preserved in our view continually from week to week in His supper, and we must, in consistency with that death, disavow all that is of the flesh.

EZRA 7 AND 8

Ezra 7; Ezra 8

The going up of Ezra was greatly to the advantage of the returned remnant, for he was a "teaching priest", and "a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which Jehovah the God of Israel had given" (verse 6). He had "directed his heart to seek the law of Jehovah and to do it, and to teach in Israel the statutes and the ordinances" (verse 10). He had priestly intelligence as to what was required "to beautify the house of Jehovah" (verse 27). His service was not to build, but to beautify, and he made request to the king as having this in mind, "according to the hand of Jehovah his God upon him". He came up invested with authority, and furnished with silver and gold, and, in addition to what he brought with him, he had unlimited permission to draw on "the king's treasure house" for "whatever more shall be needful". Provision was made for everything requisite for the beautifying and maintenance of the house and its service. All this was in the will of God, as following upon the building of the house and its dedication. The service of Ezra was needed as well as that of Joshua and Zerubbabel. And it has been so in our day.

Ezra represents a ministry which brings out from Scripture increased light as to the service of God, a ministry which has in view that the house shall be spiritually beautified. This requires attention to detail. Priestly sensibilities will lead to particular attention being given to "the law", which, for us, includes the whole of Scripture. Ezra was "an accomplished scribe of the law of the God of the heavens" (verse 12); he had an accurate acquaintance with the law, and would be able to bring the law to bear on every detail of the service. "The law", for us, includes all that God has made known as His will. An "accomplished scribe" can bring it out, and call attention to features which will beautify the house. When saints first began to break bread apart from any sectarian position, there was much yet to learn as to the assembly as the house of God, and its holy service. But saints in separation from human systems were in a position where they could learn, and as they were prepared to receive light it was given to them. Wherever there is faithfulness to light that has been given, God vouchsafes further light as to His will. The last century has witnessed a continual accession of spiritual light. Attention has been called to one thing after another which needed adjustment. God has not failed to provide a ministry which has brought out His mind with increasing clearness and fulness. He has given much help as to details connected with His service, and He will no doubt continue to do so. All the positive ministry which makes God better known, and which exalts His beloved Son, and which brings out the thoughts of divine love in regard to His saints, has brought with

it increased precious material for holy service. Much spiritual wealth, answering to the silver and gold brought up by Ezra, has been brought up to enrich the service.

No thoughtful person can consider what has been furnished in ministry, even in our own time, without being impressed by the fact that it has tended to 'beautify' the house of God, and to enhance His service. Even conflicts which have arisen, and difficulties which have had to be met, have been the means of bringing out further light and giving increased knowledge of God, and this beautifies the house and helps its service. Sorrowful as conflicts are — and particularly when they result in saints missing their way — they are enriching when we see that something that is precious to God is at stake. This must be the case if there is any spiritual element at all in a conflict. It is in looking out for spiritual gain, and for what makes more of divine Persons, that we shall find safety and enlargement. Who can measure the gain that has come to saints through light being given as to eternal life and the Lord's sonship in manhood? Yet these great realities were not established in the faith and affections of saints without conflict. Enrichment lies in the positive ministry which God gives, and this is the thing to look out for. We must, in principle, keep near to Ezra and his companions; we must hold to that ministry which brings out the mind of God, and which adds to the beauty of His house and the richness of its service.

It is touching to see God putting an earnest care for His house and its service into the hearts of many at a time when even those whom He had delivered from captivity had proved unfaithful, as we learn from chapter 9. The great provision of silver and gold and vessels which Ezra brought to Jerusalem was certainly not because the remnant at Jerusalem was in a good condition. It was far otherwise. The whole matter was the fruit of God's mercy and grace; it was a fresh movement of revival at a time when sad defection had taken place at Jerusalem. If God did not renew His work of revival from time to time it would most certainly die down, and He generally revives His work by bringing in some spiritual element that was not there before. I have no doubt that in the corrective epistles to Galatia and Corinth, and the protective epistle to Colosse, much was brought in that was in addition to what the saints had known before. And in the recovery of the truth it has not all been brought out at once. In the days we are speaking of, when God recovered His people, or a remnant of them, from Babylonish captivity, it was first Zerubbabel, then Ezra, then Nehemiah. Each one brought in something that was not there before. We may confidently expect that God will continue His reviving work in these last days until the moment comes for the saints to be translated. It is for us to seek divine strengthening such as Ezra got: "And I was strengthened, as the

hand of Jehovah my God was upon me; and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me", chapter 7: 28.

God does not work merely by truth or principles, but by persons in whom the truth abides. So we find a goodly number of persons in chapter 8 who were prepared to move with Ezra. We are thankful for all ministry of the truth, but truth is very ineffective unless persons move with it in a practical way. Ezra surveyed the company gathered together (chapter 8: 15) "and found none of the sons of Levi there". It is sad to think that, when God is moving so graciously to revive His work, there should be a lack of levites. I think it touches a weak spot even today. Ezra expects the "chief men" and the "men of understanding" to move in the matter. There must be "ministers for the house of our God" (verse 17). It was a matter for exercise and movement. When the Lord said, "the workmen are few". He told His disciples to "supplicate therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth workmen unto his harvest". I suppose we are all conscious of the fewness of the labourers. Let us pray that "by the good hand of our God upon us" (verse 18) more may be furnished. Nethinim are also needed as well as levites. They have a subordinate, but very necessary, place as helping the levitical service. It is a comfort to know that there is room for service that is, perhaps, not so highly thought of as the public ministry of the word, but which helps that ministry in a somewhat lower grade of service. Not one who engages in such service is overlooked: "all of them were expressed by name". If we cannot exactly take the place of being levites, let us by all means be Nethinim, and help the levites!

The exercise about "a right way" in verses 21 - 23 is very touching. The fact that God's good hand had been upon Ezra in a remarkable way did not diminish his exercise as to the path before him. "And I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance". This is a beautiful spirit in which to be found in regard of all the circumstances which beset God's testimony today. Ezra had spoken so confidently to the king about the hand of God being upon all them for good that seek Him that he was ashamed to ask for a band of soldiers. Do we not know something of such an exercise as this? We say things, perhaps really in faith, but when we come to face the actual difficulties and dangers that confront us we find the necessity of being cast upon God in fasting and prayer that our confidence may not be found to be a vain thing. Our faith is not in vain, but we are tested as to its reality. God will never fail a humble and exercised heart. "And we fasted, and besought our God for this; and he was entreated of us".

The silver and the gold and the vessels were put into the care of priests. Only holy persons could be entrusted with holy things (verse 28). All was weighed into their hands at the beginning of the journey, and weighed again at the end in the house of God: "the whole by number and by weight; and all the weight was written down at that time" (verse 34). Faithful servants of God are very much concerned that not one item of what is precious as contributing to the service should be lost, or suffer in weight, in our hands. It is to be feared that things often *do* lose weight; we retain things in form and word when their true spiritual *weight* is no longer held in our souls. May God preserve in our hearts true priestly exercise as to this! The closing verses of chapter 8 are a beautiful example of offering service in remnant times. Both burnt-offerings and sin-offerings are for all Israel. In bringing the preciousness of Christ before God we have the joy of knowing that it is in His mind for all saints. The worship of the assembly is always in the light of what Christ is for acceptance and propitiation for all who are of the assembly. There is great spiritual expansion in this.

EZRA 9

Ezra 9

The whole history of Scripture prepares us to recognise that, on the human side, there is always a tendency to slip away from what is of God, and the greater the divine favour shown the more subtly will Satan seek to corrupt the people of God in relation to it. So we see here that, after the house had been built, and provision made for its beautifying and the carrying on of its service, unfaithfulness of a serious character manifested itself amongst the returned remnant. The "princes" had to report to Ezra that, "The people of Israel, and the priests and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, according to their abominations ... for they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, and have mingled the holy seed with the peoples of the lands; and the hand of the princes and rulers has been chief in this unfaithfulness" (verses 1, 2).

The "princes" were those who, like the house of Chloe at Corinth, discerned the unfaithfulness that had come in. One would gather that the prophetic ministry of Haggai and Zechariah had ceased at this time, so that no powerful voice from God had been raised to check the mixture of "the holy seed with the peoples of the lands". It is of deep interest to see that in the divine ordering of the assembly provision was made for ministry in each locality of a prophetic character (see 1 Corinthians 14). This would assure that, along with what was for positive building up, there would be the calling attention, on God's part, to any influence which might tend to corrupt His temple. Those who prophesied would discern the incoming evil, and would bring in the good to counteract it, long before it showed itself in any glaring way. At Corinth the more showy speaking with tongues had evidently overshadowed the exercise of prophetic gift, and a moral state had developed which would have been checked in its beginnings if prophecy had had its due place in the assembly. One can understand that it was not a mere detail when Satan succeeded, in the very early days of the church, in setting up the clerical system so that meetings for the exercise of prophetic gift as contemplated in 1 Corinthians 14 became impossible.

There can be no doubt that corrupting influences will always be at work. Salvation lies, in the first place, in the ability to discern that they are at work. This was found with the "princes" when Ezra came to Jerusalem. So long as this element is present there is hope. For if it is pointed out that an evil is present, not only will priestly sensibilities become active, as they did in Ezra, but all who tremble at the words of God will be powerfully affected. Then, if

full confession is made, the enemy's work may be so counteracted that complete restoration may be brought about. Indeed, it is a comfort to see that, notwithstanding the unfaithfulness that had to be mourned over and confessed, there is evidence of a much deeper work of God in the souls of His people in the last two chapters of this book than had been seen in the earlier chapters. The lesson of all this is most important for ourselves, for we often have sorrowful reminders that, in spite of much divine favour, the same kind of unfaithfulness shows itself amongst the returned remnant today. How often do we see links with the world formed, or links with believers not walking in the truth, either by marriage or friendship, or by association for mutual advantage, sometimes even by joining in worldly pleasures, or by the reading of worldly literature! If these things go on, "the holy seed" does not preserve its own distinctiveness and separation, and the consequences are spiritually disastrous. For these things being carried on are the clear evidence of unfaithfulness to the Lord.

It is to be noticed that the "foreign wives" with which the holy seed had mingled were of the very nations that had to be overcome in Joshua's day. After long centuries they were still present to exercise a baneful influence on the returned remnant. The very things by which the church was corrupted in its early days are the things which will be a snare to the remnant in our day. They are all "of the world", though presenting themselves in varied forms. "Foreign wives" taken by the people of God represent, for us, not only those personal alliances to which we have referred, but also principles or associations which are contrary to what should mark "the holy seed". For example, the legal principle, which Paul had to combat in the assemblies of Galatia, is one of the "foreign wives" which may be taken today. It is a principle which, over the greater part of christendom, has displaced the true knowledge of God. The world often ensnares by taking on a religious form suited to man after the flesh. But worldly religion always gives some place to the man that was crucified with Christ; it sets up again what God has condemned. And it always takes away from the enjoyment of the blessings of grace, liberty in Christ Jesus, sonship, and the Spirit of God's Son in our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. The loss of spiritual joy is a danger signal which should warn believers from continuing on the line of religious flesh. Paul said to the Galatians, "What then was your blessedness?" They had turned to law, to circumcision, to observing days and months and times and years, but they had lost their blessedness, they had fallen from grace; they had really gone away from all that they once enjoyed in Christ.

Satan does not always use religious or legal flesh to turn us aside. Perhaps more often in our day he allures by something that appeals to our natural and

carnal tendencies. What a terrible thing it is for one who has known something of the privileges of the assembly to give them up for some bit of fleshly gratification! It was by such means that he brought about unfaithfulness at Corinth in the early days, and he will use the same things now. Paul brought the truth of the temple before the Corinthians to correct their unholiness, and their association with the unclean and idolatrous world, and he brought the truth of the body before them to correct their tendency to form sects and parties or to act independently. Sectarianism is a carnal thing; it is the practical denial of that one body which the Spirit has formed. To adopt a sectarian principle today is really to take a "foreign wife"; it is to espouse a principle which is alien to the present working of God, for, according to truth, we are all part of a divinely formed organism, in which each member has its appointed place, and functions for the benefit of the body. Where the sectarian principle is adopted the clerical principle generally goes with it. I suppose the latter got a footing in the early days of the church through the readiness of the many, in a day of spiritual decline, to let another do the service which was really the privilege and responsibility of all the believing men. It is really a form of unfaithfulness, however unwittingly done.

Then at Colosse there was a tendency to be led away "through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the teaching of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ". The human imagination delights in such things as worshipping angels, and prying into what is unseen, but Paul says that the one who would do this is "vainly puffed up by the mind of his flesh". But philosophy and human imagination and ordinances and ascetic austerities are really of the world. Those who take up such things are really being fraudulently deprived of their prize; they are being carried away from Christ. They are as guilty of unfaithfulness to God as were those who took "foreign wives" in Ezra's day.

In all the epistles we may see what had to be overcome by faithful saints at the beginning of the church's history: seeking their own things, minding earthly things, loving the world,

loving money, the snare of idolatry, the deceit of many antichrists, Satan's ministers pretending to be apostles of Christ. Now we may be certain that all these things are present to be a snare to any recovered remnant in our day. Their influence is as much to be dreaded as that of the "foreign wives" of Ezra's day. They have to be met by princely care and watchfulness, and by priestly sensibilities such as we see in Ezra.

"And when I heard this thing, I rent my mantle and my garment, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down overwhelmed" (verse

3). Do we feel like this about the things which corrupt "the holy seed" today? One pious person truly feeling things as before God may become a rallying point in an evil day. "Then were assembled to me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the unfaithfulness of those that had been carried away; and I sat overwhelmed until the evening oblation" (verse 4).

There is a beautiful touch of grace in "the evening oblation" being brought in here. A well-known servant of the Lord said, 'If you want a man to judge himself you must minister Christ to him'. I think it is on that principle that "the evening oblation" is mentioned here. The "evening oblation" was the offering by fire to Jehovah for a sweet odour of a lamb as a continual burnt-offering, with its oblation and drink-offering. "It shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations", Exodus 29: 42. God would have His people to know that the sweet odour of Christ is the ground on which He dwells in their midst, and is their God. It is there that He meets His people. Now God had not left this ground, though there had been great unfaithfulness on the part of His people, and He would have their repentance and confession to be in the light of it. We might, perhaps, without unduly straining the type, regard the "morning" oblation as setting forth God's precious thought at the beginning of the assembly day, and the "evening oblation" as having its place at the end of that day. Such an application is justified because there cannot possibly be any change in the ground on which God's people are before Him as accepted. He was with His saints at the beginning of this "accepted time" according to the infinite sweet odour and acceptance of the offering of Christ, and He is still with them on precisely the same ground. In the light of this what do we think of our links with the world, of the "foreign wives" by whom we have been ensnared? It is in seeing what we have been led away from that we get power to judge the influences that have led us away.

So we can understand the very deep sorrow and confession of Ezra. He had in mind the wonderful place of the people as identified in God's thoughts with the sweet odour of the burnt-offering. As remembering this he could not do other than go down to the very lowest point in confession. He felt how unfaithful the people had been to the God who had set the burnt-offering among them throughout their generations. God has fully blessed us through Christ, and in Christ, and has not departed from any of His thoughts about us. Why should we not, in the sense of this marvellous grace, fully and deeply own our shame in forming links with the world which displace Christ in our hearts? God does not want us to judge ourselves legally, but from the standpoint of the immense favour in Christ in which He has called us. It was on this ground that He appealed to His erring saints in Galatia and at Corinth

and elsewhere, and it is on this ground that He appeals to us. It is in getting a revived sense of His grace in Christ that we are brought down to the very bottom in the judgment of ourselves for having yielded to the influence of things which are really worthless. Whatever may be the form which unfaithfulness has taken in any one of us Christ is the power for self-judgment and confession, and also for courage and decision in putting away the influence that has ensnared us. As Christ is brought in and gets His right place with us once more, there is power to detect what is contrary to Him, and to feel its true character before God. What Ezra expressed in his prayer and confession was what the Spirit of Christ felt about the state of things that existed. If we truly return to a sense that Christ is everything for us before God we shall urgently desire to move into company with the Spirit of Christ about everything that has been a snare to us. We shall want to gather to Ezra as feeling that we have been a grief to Christ, but we want now to be a comfort to Him. Let us all really face before God the truth as to our state and associations.

EZRA 10

Ezra 10

The tears spoken of in verse 1 were the outcome of a deep moral work in the souls of God's people. There had been nothing like it before. Ezra had not only brought increased light to them, and more complete furnishing for the service of God, but he brought amongst them priestly sensibilities which deeply affected them, and brought about a most blessed work of moral recovery.

Shechaniah made full confession of the unfaithfulness, but his heart was confirmed with grace, for he said, "Yet now there is hope for Israel concerning this thing" (verse 2). After all, there was a great opportunity; unfaithfulness need not continue. The principle of covenant, as expressing a solemn engagement to put away all foreign wives, was available. If there has been unfaithfulness with us the remedy lies in our own hands. Shechaniah says, "Let it be done"; "Be of good courage and do it". And Ezra made the chiefs "to swear that they would do according to this word. And they swore" (verse 5). When there has been unfaithfulness there must be definite decision and action. When we have been entangled in some worldly association there is no getting clear without purpose and decision. We must definitely break with those workings of the flesh, and those worldly influences, that have hindered us spiritually. Many a believer knows something that is a spiritual hindrance to him. Let it be dealt with at once. In getting free from the flesh and the world we have to act. It is very little use praying if we are not prepared to act. We have to put to death the deeds of the body; we have to overcome the world. Every "foreign wife" is really an opportunity for a spiritual victory. A certain spiritual violence is often needed, which the Lord referred to when He said, "The kingdom of the heavens is taken by violence, and the violent seize on it", Matthew 11: 12.

Of course, we clearly understand that, in applying this scripture to our own time, if the unfaithfulness has taken the form of marriage with an unbeliever, this is not a link which can be severed. And it is possible that there may be, under certain circumstances, links wrongly entered into, but which, having been entered into, involve obligations to others which cannot be righteously set aside. In such cases the unfaithfulness has to be owned and confessed, but its consequences have to be accepted as the government of God. In humbling ourselves under His mighty hand we learn by what we have to suffer governmentally, and in due time His mercy may come in for us.

The exercise of Ezra 10 had to be taken up by all "the children of the captivity". They had all to gather themselves together unto Jerusalem, on pain

of being "separated from the congregation". The matter involved the honour of Jehovah's name, and therefore everyone must prove himself to be pure in regard to it. If there is definite unfaithfulness with reference to worldly associations, the whole assembly has responsibility as to it. It can never be regarded as a matter of individual liberty. If the Spirit of God raises an exercise as to certain moral conditions, the whole assembly must move with it. If anyone does not share in it he morally ceases to be of the assembly. No independency was tolerated in Ezra's day; much less can it have any sanction when saints are "one body".

This great congregation sitting "in the open space of the house of God, trembling because of the matter, and because of the pouring rain" (verse 9), is expressive of the deep concern with which the whole congregation now regarded the matter. Ezra called upon them to make confession of their unfaithfulness, and to separate themselves from the peoples of the lands, and from the foreign wives. The conscience of the congregation was active, and they answered, "Yes, it is for us to do according to thy words. But the people are many, and it is a time of pouring rain, and it is not possible to stand without; neither is this a work for one day or two". While fully convicted of the gravity of the matter they felt that it could not be dealt with there and then. It was too serious to be dealt with in a general way; each individual case must be soberly considered by the princes as standing for all the congregation, and with them the elders of every city and the judges thereof. Nothing was to be done by mere impulse; there was careful provision that the exercise should be worked out as a matter of principle in every locality concerned. It is a beautiful example of how any serious matter involving the Lord's name should be handled.

It appears from verse 15 that four men stood up against the exercises of the congregation. Their names are inserted as a warning to beware of all such, like certain men whom Paul mentions. Satan will see to it that generally there is some opposition to what is of God, but this must not be allowed to hinder a spiritual exercise from being brought to completion. The whole matter was ended by the first day of the first month. When any decided action which maintains what is due to the Lord is carried through it inaugurates a new year of spiritual prosperity.

The sons of the priests who had taken foreign wives "gave their hand to send away their wives; and they offered a ram of the flock as trespass-offering for their guilt" (verse 19). The ram was the appointed trespass-offering when the rights of Jehovah had been infringed (Leviticus 5: 15); it signifies a very mature and energetic apprehension of Christ in trespass-offering character.

The sense of assembly failure, and of our own failure in regard to God's holy things, should bring us to that. We are far too light about matters that really involve the rights of God. We do not consider that we can only be cleansed from the guilt of unfaithfulness by Christ being the trespass-offering for it. Failure to maintain separation is a much more serious offence than we are apt to think. We should understand that we are not clear of it before God until we have brought the ram of the trespass-offering.

The names given from verse 18 to the end of the chapter are the names of overcomers; they had all separated themselves to Jehovah. So I believe the last chapter is really the best in the book. There is a depth of moral exercise that had not been seen before, and a more true separation to Jehovah. I believe the Lord intends that *our* last chapter shall be the brightest and best in our history; more self-judgment than ever, more appreciation of Christ, more separation to God, more priestly sensibilities, more suitability for the service of God! The history of the assemblies contains much to grieve over, but let us not forget that the Lord contemplates having an overcomer in every assembly. Whatever has been in the past, let us see to it that we finish as overcomers!

COLOSSIANS 1

Colossians 1:1-16

CAC We had before us in the epistle to the Hebrews how the Spirit of God was leading Jewish saints out of everything connected in a religious way with earth, building up their souls in the knowledge of Christ in heaven, and thus disentangling them from the system of things which they had been connected with, even by the ordinance of God. He was bringing them to find such completeness and satisfaction in Christ that they might be prepared to leave even the best things on earth and "go forth to him without the camp".

The object of the Spirit of God in the epistle to the Colossians is very similar, only that gentiles are in view. Paul is seeking in this epistle to disentangle a gentile company from every subtle snare which would connect them in mind and affection with earth. He is seeking to set them free by the ministry of Christ and to lead them in to the blessedness of being risen with Christ, so that they might be "filled full" in Christ.

Ques Were the gentiles in advance of the Jews?

CAC The Hebrews addressed in their epistle had received Jesus as the Messiah, and what they needed was to be enlarged and confirmed in the knowledge of Christ. They had received Him, but they needed to be rooted and built up in Him. These gentile Colossians had also received the Christ. It is one thing to receive the Christ, and another so to know the Person we have received that we are independent of every other man and free from every influence that does not emanate from Christ. We should be wonderful people if we really got the good of this epistle in our souls.

Rem Paul writes here as an apostle and connects with himself Timothy as a brother.

CAC I think the apostle had peculiar pleasure in linking others with himself. In writing to the Galatians He brings in "all the brethren". He seemed to take the opportunity when ever he could of linking brethren with himself. This suggests that we get not only what is apostolic, which is in a sense official, but also the thought of brethren brought in. Paul says of Timothy, "my true child": it means he was a true descendant of Paul morally; he took character from him. He was not converted by Paul's ministry. It is our privilege to be children of Paul — to be conscious of a direct link with the apostle. We are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets; it is our privilege to be directly linked with the men who were the vessels of ministry in christianity. We have their teaching; we are put into contact with Paul as we read this epistle; and as we come

under the moral impress of it we take character from him and the light God gave to him. Paul committed things to Timothy the brother, and Timothy was told to commit them to faithful men who were able to teach others. That is not connected with gift but with fidelity. There is an originality about gift, but you are not to be original on this line. You are to cherish what is passed on to you, and to pass it on faithfully. It is not gift but fidelity; and that is the true apostolic succession. It is a question of faithful men now, and it is a wonderful thing to have been connected with them. We have to hold things not only as doctrine but as vital things and to be able to pass them on to others. Epaphras was a faithful man, I suppose; the Colossians had been converted through his labours; he was a man of prayer.

Ques Why is the epistle addressed to "the saints and faithful brethren"?

CAC Paul recognises their state: they were not only believers but holy and faithful brethren. This whole epistle supposes a certain state in saints. When Paul was writing to the Romans he did not know much about them, except that it was notorious in the world that there was a company of believers in Rome. In writing to them he took the ground that they had the Spirit; there is much about the Spirit in the epistle. We can normally take that ground with saints; if they have received the Spirit they have spiritual capabilities in having the Spirit. But in writing to the Colossians he could take the ground of what the saints had become by the Spirit's work — that is greater than having the Spirit. The Spirit is mentioned only once in this epistle. In verse 8 where "love in the Spirit" is spoken of, it means they had never seen Paul; it is in contrast to having known him by seeing his face in the flesh.

Rem It is remarkable that "Christ in you" should be said of a gentile company.

CAC Christ was in their affections; that was the Spirit's work; it was through His work that Christ had a place in their affections. It is a pleasure to God when He can see the effect of the Spirit's presence; we see it here, so Paul does not need to dwell on the Spirit being there; the evidence of it was in the effect produced. Glory was in hope; the fact that Christ was in their affections was the hope of glory.

Rem They had faith in Christ and love to the saints.

CAC Yes. They were right at the centre and right at the circumference. They had God's anointed Man as the Object of faith and they took in all the saints in their affections. It is a great thing to join the brethren in your affections; people who love all the saints have joined the brethren. It is evidence that we have passed from death unto life if we have the brethren in our affections. "By this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine if ye have love amongst

yourselves". There is a brotherhood here. In the world a brotherhood signifies those who have a common bond and affinity, but the christian brotherhood is the only true one.

Ques How would you show your love for all saints?

CAC The apostle showed his love by praying for them. That is open to us; we are not straitened in prayer though we are straitened in almost every other way. There are many saints even in this town that we do not know and never have shaken hands with. It is a sad witness to the failure of the church. Epaphras rendered a beautiful service. I suppose he felt he could not help the saints further; he knew the point they had reached and he realised their danger, and, feeling his inability to help them, he went off and told Paul about them, and Paul wrote this epistle. While Paul wrote, Epaphras prayed; he agonised in prayer as Paul did also. Paul says in chapter 2, "I would have you know what combat I have for you ... and as many as have not seen my face in flesh" — that takes us in, too. Faith, hope and love have a great place with the saints; Christ the object of faith; the saints the object of love; and heaven in hope.

Ques What is the hope laid up?

CAC All that is connected with the heavenly calling, sonship, what they had heard of in the gospel; that they had a place in heaven and were going to be there in sonship for the pleasure of God. The gospel confers everything: it had brought to them the light of the heavenly relationship and position. "The glad tidings, which are come to you ... and are bearing fruit and growing". That is the proper order. The glad tidings come, and when they are received in faith they begin to produce fruit. The Philippian jailor is an illustration when converted he "took them that same hour ... and washed them from their stripes"; that was the gospel producing fruit. If it does not produce fruit it has not come in faith; we should not accept that a person was converted if we did not see fruit. The gospel makes a brutal man a kind man; the man who had been beating the apostles now washes their stripes. But that is not the end; the gospel goes on expanding in the soul; it grows. We do not at first receive a big gospel; it is big on the divine side but not on the side of our apprehension — it grows and expands in the soul.

JC Is that like the light that came to Saul? Each time he speaks of it, it is greater.

CAC Yes, the sense of what he got at the beginning was continually expanding in his soul. Every year we live the gospel should be bigger with us; there should be a larger apprehension of God's grace, and of what He has

given to us in Christ. If the saints would allow the gospel to give them character, to put its own blessed impress on them, wisdom would be justified of her children. The gospel is the greatest thing. The remark was made many years ago: the ministry of the assembly unfolds what the ministry of the gospel confers. The ministry of the gospel shows all that God is for man, all that Christ is for man, and, in a sense, all that the Spirit is for man; all that is included in the glad tidings. The ministry of the assembly unfolds what is effected in man for the pleasure of divine Persons; that is the other side. But then after all, what there is in divine Persons is the greatest, so there is nothing like the gospel!

Ques Are we defective in the gospel?

CAC We have not taken it all in. Sometimes when a brother preaches on Lord's day evening, he gets discouraged if he does not see a lot of unconverted people. I wish we did see them; but the preacher may always have the comfort that there is not a person sitting there who knows the gospel in its fulness. He may think they do, but they do not! Even the preacher does not, but if he has the desire to know it better, he may be helped to get a fresh sense of the grace of God, and an expansion in his own soul as he speaks. Many a man has actually been converted while preaching; the truth he was telling out has been brought home to his soul. One would like to get a more adequate sense of the greatness of the gospel; what it presents is infinite — divine Persons, love, wisdom, power — everything that is infinitely great and will fill eternity with its blessedness. The one amongst us who has the greatest apprehension of the gospel falls far short of the fulness of Christ: we can never say the time has come when the glad tidings cannot grow any more in our souls.

Generally speaking people are indebted to others; the Colossians had heard the gospel from Epaphras. But Paul's was a special case; the Lord dealt with him directly; he tells the Galatians that his gospel was not of man and he did not receive it through man.

Ques What is loving in the Spirit?

CAC It is in contrast to knowing a person in the flesh. The Colossians had great affection for Paul because they had benefited by his ministry; a brother whose ministry has helped you, but whom you have never seen, you love in the Spirit. If you have known him personally it is not quite the same. It means that they were greatly attached to Paul as the vessel of divine ministry. Epaphras had enjoyed Paul's ministry himself, and he gave his converts a sense of the preciousness of Paul's ministry, so they all loved him, though they had never seen him. It is a great thing to love the vessels of ministry. The Lord

puts the ministry into certain vessels, and it is a great proof of spiritual health if we love the vessels of spiritual ministry; it is not what the men are in themselves.

COLOSSIANS 1

Colossians 1:1-12

CAC The effect of the ministry of Christ is that faith in Christ Jesus and love to all the saints is brought about. Epaphras ministered Christ; he was "a faithful minister of Christ". God has shown us great favour in allowing us to be under the influence of a precious ministry of Christ; we hardly realise how great a favour it is. The effect is that we become conscious there is one Man who can be trusted; there is one Man whom God has trusted.

If there is faith in Christ Jesus there will be with it love to all the saints; we become interested in the saints for they are of and in Christ; they are of that order of man. 'Faith in Christ Jesus and love to all the saints' is the starting point in connection with assembly privilege; it is a good beginning. The foundation is a necessary part of the house, but it is not all the house. There was a condition in Colosse which was a good starting point, but it was not the finish.

Ques What is the full knowledge of His will?

CAC It is the full scope of the pleasure of God in connection with the Head; it does not refer to the believer's individual pathway. We have to grow up in ability to rightly act in relation to the Head. If all saints were filled with the full knowledge of God's will everyone would have learned to act in relation to God's anointed Man, and in that way the body of Christ would come into evidence. Everyone would be found doing what he ought to do and saying what he ought to say at the right moment and doing and saying it in relation to a glorified Man in heaven. God would have us to understand His blessed will for us as connected with Christ. Everything that is for God's pleasure centres in Christ, so that, if I want to understand the will of God, Christ must be the starting point. The importance of prayer is very great. When we find the apostle praying it indicates that the things he prays for can only be got by prayer, they cannot be imparted by ministry. Prayer brings in the divine acting, the working of God. It is blessed to have ministry that is of God, but there is something more needed, that is divine operation in the souls of saints, and that stands connected with prayer. As the apostle prays here he goes on into an illimitable expanse of things till he has brought in Christ and the assembly, and the reconciliation of all things. In Paul we see a man who had wisdom and spiritual understanding. He was able to compass the immense thoughts of God in Christ, and all that Christ was to the body, and he could bring it before the saints in wisdom, and give the presentation of it that the saints needed at the moment. He had never seen these Colossian saints but he could bring the

unsearchable riches of the Christ to them in a suitable way as they needed it. We might desire a little of that wisdom and spiritual understanding; it can be got where Paul got it.

Rem He was in prison.

CAC Yes, the epistles that are so rich in the ministry of Christ came from prison — Colossians, Ephesians and Philippians are prison epistles. I suppose it is often when things are most straitened outwardly that there is the greatest expansion spiritually.

Ques Is ministry on the line of "Give ye them to eat"?

CAC There are three distinct features in the Lord's ministry, and they are characteristic of true ministry; they are, healing, feeding, and teaching. If people are suffering from maladies they cannot enjoy food, so spiritual healing comes first in Christ's ministry. That is negative; it is what corrects and heals all that is out of order. There are all sorts of moral diseases and infirmities amongst the saints, but spiritual ministry is a corrective of all that. Then the Lord not only healed but fed. That is positive nourishing and strengthening, in the good of all that is blessed — all that is of God and of Christ — it is made available for us as food. We need building up spiritually in all that there is in divine Persons for us; there is a wondrous supply of food in the making known of what God is and of what Christ is. Lastly the Lord taught them; He gave them the most wonderful and blessed unfoldings of the mind of God that were ever known. Spiritual teaching gives us intelligent access to the mind of God, to the great thoughts cherished in His mind; it puts us on confidential terms with God. God communicates His thoughts to us; this is not what meets my need but what satisfies His heart. He says, 'I will put you on such terms with Me that I will tell you all I am thinking of and going to do'. Think of the blessed God communicating to us all His thoughts! The king would not do it, but God does it. These three features were demonstrated in all their blessedness in the Lord's ministry, and all true ministry is the result of an impression of Christ. If you are suffering from moral disease you cannot enjoy food; and if you are not nourished you do not understand what divine Persons are as available for food, and you are not man enough to take in the thoughts of God. What we get here is on the line of teaching, entering into all that is for the pleasure of God, so that we might be able to act in relation to it, to walk worthily of the Lord. He was the One of whom it was said, "the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand". God put all His pleasure, all that He delighted in, in the hands of the Lord to be carried out, and we are to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing; it takes in everything pleasing to God. The apostle has in mind that every one of the saints should be put in his right

place in relation to the Head, so that the pleasure of God might come out in the body in the way saints move together.

H What would "every good work" be?

CAC They are set forth in Christ. In Ephesians it says they are "before prepared that we should walk in them", Ephesians 2: 10. Everything that God can delight in in man has been seen in the Lord Jesus, so we have not to start out in a new path. It is new to us, but all the characteristics of that path have been set forth in Christ; He went about doing good. The test of whether a thing is a good work is, is it expressive of Christ? Is it the character of things that came out in Christ? If it is not, then it is not a good work. It was said of one, "She has wrought a good work toward me". To come together to remember the Lord is a good work; He was the One to suggest it so that makes it a good work. He taught His disciples to pray, so prayer is a good work. If our hearts learnt to connect everything with Christ it would give us a good idea of spiritual things; if we cannot trace them to Christ they are not good works. It is a good work to read the Scriptures; the Lord was accustomed to read them in public as well as in private. We are encouraged to believe we are doing a good work tonight in reading the Scriptures publicly together because the Lord did it. What makes a thing right and good is that Christ is the moving impulse of it; that is what gives it value before God. When He was here everything He did was done in obedience and communion; it all moved from the Father — the Head of Christ is God. There was a Man here on earth who was always true to the fact that God was His Head; He never exercised divine power by an act of His own will but in relation to His Head. Now we have Christ for our Head. This epistle is full of the headship of Christ; everything good and right gets its impulse from Christ. I may do a thing with mixed motives, but the little bit of Christ's influence in it is what gives it value with God. There may be a mixture of vanity or desire to be thought well of in what we do, but, if it is right at all, there is a streak of gold in it and that is what gives it value. One might give vast sums of money to do good and there might be no fruit for God because it did not spring from abiding in Christ. He is the Spring of everything for God's pleasure, and fruitfulness is connected with abiding in Him.

Ques How does growing by the true knowledge of God come about?

CAC I suppose all edification is increase by the knowledge of God; there is no true growth apart from that. As we learn God we are formed in the divine nature. Peter puts it as through "the greatest and precious promises", 2 Peter 1: 4. The promises express to me what God is; every promise is the setting

forth of what God is for man. As I take hold of the great and precious promises I become partaker of the divine nature.

Ques What is the full knowledge of God?

CAC All that God is has come into view. God is in the light; there is no limitation on the side of revelation. If we are not formed in the divine nature we have not much capacity for sharing the portion of saints in light.

The glory of young men is their strength. Colossians answers to John's young men. In John it is babes, young men and fathers. Paul has his three epistles. Romans would answer to babes, Colossians to young men, and Ephesians to John's fathers. Paul and John both regard the saints in three distinct stages of spiritual growth. If one is strengthened with all might according to the power of His glory one has got beyond the babe stage. "I have written to you, young men, because ye are strong", 1 John 2: 14. One who has reached this point is more than a babe. It is not strength for action but for suffering; it is ability to endure and to suffer. It is wonderful to think of the power of His glory coming down to enable saints to endure and to suffer *with joy*.

COLOSSIANS 1

Colossians 1:9-24

CAC It is a great thing for us to be moved away from the narrowness and limitations connected with ourselves to the great spiritual possibilities which are brought near to us when we have to do with God. I suppose we have to follow the line which is laid down in this chapter if we are to come into the presence of the blessedness of Christ as the Head.

Ques Would you say what the line is?

CAC The line of the kingdom. We have to move along a certain moral way to reach Christ as presented in the latter part of the chapter.

P Is lordship spoken of in connection with the kingdom?

CAC Yes, there must be that side. We must learn the kingdom and be in the good of it to be set free to contemplate the Head. It needs great liberty of heart to contemplate the Head. The kingdom is presented in a unique manner in this epistle; it is not seen anywhere else in the same way. It is a peculiar aspect of the kingdom which needs to be experimentally learned if saints are to be free in their affections to contemplate the Head. I would say that in the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love we are free in heart because love pervades that kingdom. It is a realm of divine affections; so the heart is liberated; we need to be there before we can apprehend what it is to be risen with Christ. It is no use to talk about being risen with Christ to a people who are not liberated in their affections.

Rem Sometimes the kingdom is touched in a legal way.

CAC Yes, the elements of legality cling very tightly to us; it is not easy to get rid of graveclothes! But the elements of darkness and bondage are eliminated from the heart in the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love. I felt greatly touched as we sang: 'O blessed living Lord, Engage our hearts with Thee'. I felt there was a power in the Lord to set us free for Himself. We asked Him to engage our hearts with Himself; there is a power in the Lord to set us free for Himself and that is the power of the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love.

We must gather up what we have had before us on previous nights. The apostle prays, and we are sure he does not pray for impossibilities. The fact of his praying shows that what he prays for is available. It supposes a people formed in answer to prayer, grown up in wisdom and spiritual understanding. It supposes growth to manhood; you do not expect to find wisdom and spiritual understanding in a baby. The result of being grown up is that we are

able to walk worthily of the Lord; there is strength for it. In the kingdom the Lord is before every one; that is the standard for the youngest believer, and for all of us, as to practical life down here. As to what we eat and drink and wear, and how we carry ourselves about our work, there is the same standard for all; each is to have the Lord before him, and not to meddle with another. In that way each would be found walking worthily of the Lord.

Ques What is the difference between the kingdom in Romans and here?

CAC The kingdom in Romans is the end in view; in Colossians it is the starting point. In Romans we are justified, and we know God as the Deliverer to set us free from sin, the law and the flesh, so that we might become suitable subjects for His kingdom, and be found in a sphere here on earth in responsibility, filled with righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, and in that sphere abounding in hope. That is the end in Romans, but that is the starting point in Colossians. We shall not understand Colossians if we do not know in some small measure what it is to be in the kingdom as seen in Romans. The aspect of the kingdom in Romans is in relation to what it delivers you *from*; in Colossians it is in relation to what it delivers you *for*. A wonderful vista is opened up in Colossians; the kingdom comes in to set us free for an entirely new order of things.

The apostle was encouraged to pray for the Colossians because there was something there to work on. Often with saints one feels that things are so immature that there is very little to work on, but it was not so with the Colossians; they had faith in Christ and they loved all the saints. The apostle was free to pray, and he prayed for possibilities, not impossibilities. Then the power of the kingdom comes in in connection with the strenuous character of life in the kingdom. Life in the kingdom is a very strenuous life, so strenuous that the natural man would break down as soon as he entered it. It is no good saying that christianity is easy; it is not. The Lord never misled anyone by making them feel that they would be in an easy path. It is a path where difficulties are great; there is a constant demand for endurance and long-suffering, and nothing will enable a saint to endure and suffer but "the might of his glory". There is not one of us but would break down at once — and we all do at times — but for the might of His glory. It conveys to me the thought of a wonderful power-house at the right hand of God, and if you can only get connected with that power-house, you will get a supply of energy that will carry you through everything. The electric cars go along the level beautifully, but they go up the steepest hill just as beautifully because they have a link with the power-house. There is a positive source of power in Christ at the right hand of God, so that when a saint is doing the will of God and comes across

difficulties and pressures and sufferings so great that they would be unendurable to nature, he is cast on that source of power, and, instead of escaping suffering by getting out of the path of God's will, he is endued with power and is enabled to endure and suffer. Paul had proved it; he was not speaking of something he knew nothing about; it is in proving a thing that we learn its true value. Can you endure suffering and bear pressure? You find out you can, when "strengthened with all power".

JRK Luther was sustained.

CAC That was in view of testimony, but this verse is not exactly testimony, but inward power that enables one to endure and suffer. The natural thought with every one of us is to get out of suffering if we can, but there is power to enable us to go on enduring and suffering *with joy*; that is the great point. Many a saint has gone through pressure which, if he had known it before, he would have thought impossible to go through. But they found they did go through it; the might of His glory carried them through.

Paul comes to the end of the prayer in the end of verse 11; the things that are to be found in verses 9, 10 and 11 are matters for prayer, but in verse 12 he passes over to thanksgiving, passes over to the region of the Father's actings. When we do so we have really passed out of the world. The moment you touch the scene of the Father's actings in your affections you are outside the world.

There are connecting links between the different lines of truth and teaching which are presented in different epistles by different writers; there are points of contact between them all because they all form one whole. What we get here has a point of contact with John's writing. It is the Father who has done everything, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of saints in light. That is the line of John's gospel. You do not carry many disciples with you through John's gospel. Many disciples dropped off when the Lord told them everything must be of the Father, and unless the Father does it nothing is done; that leaves no place for man. Therefore when you touch the Father's actings you are outside the world. If we were giving thanks to the Father in the spirit of this verse we should be in affection outside the world; we should be free in an out-of-the-world condition. A people entangled with the world could not be put together for one moment with those giving thanks to the Father outside the world in the region of the Father's actings. We have no capability beyond the measure in which we are formed in the divine nature; that is the force of verse 12 — "made us fit". It is not by washing us in the blood of Christ — not 'fit' from the point of view of righteousness. 'Fit' here is the same word as translated elsewhere 'competent' or 'sufficient'. It is the same word as in "who

is sufficient for these things", and "Our competency is of God". If the Father has made us sufficient, or competent, it implies a nature competent to enjoy and enter into these things. It is the line of the Father's working. In John's gospel the Lord refers to it again and again; He speaks of the Father drawing and teaching, and persons learning from the Father. He speaks of the Father's sheep, and the men given Him by the Father. It is the Father's side; it is the backbone of John's gospel on the subjective side. On one side the Father is revealed in the Son, but on the other there is a divine generation who have their origin in the Father. That is the line presented here; that is the kind of people who come into view of Christ as Head.

The portion of saints in divine light is wonderful. Our portion is Christ, and that is the blessedness of the assembly. When we come together in assembly we are entitled to forget everything but the divine light in which we have our common portion. One would not like a thought of imperfection in a believer to come into one's mind at the Supper. We are there in divine light, morally apart from blemishes or imperfections; bound up with all the perfections of Christ. We could not have the lofty note of praise proper to the assembly if saints were before us as involved in all kinds of imperfections; it would take all the music out of our hearts! We should not be sharing the portion of the saints in light; we should be away from the Father's realm and from the spirit of thanksgiving.

It is a wonderful thing to have touched the circle of the Father's activities and to look on saints according to what they are in divine generation. Some may be babes, young and feeble in the family, but all are there as members of the family. All are entitled to come there in the family atmosphere. I think we touch the family idea here: "See what love the Father has given to us that we should be called the children of God". It is a question of what divine love has given. None of the saints did anything to get that place or to retain it; the Father's love gave them that place. To partake of the divine nature is a fact, a blessed divine reality brought about by the Father's love. If I partake of the divine nature I have capacity to enjoy things that belong to the sphere of light where the saints have their portion as bound up with all the blessedness of Christ. There is not a shade of imperfection or sign of blemish there in that light. If you could tell me there was a shade of imperfection there you would ruin my happiness. It does not follow that every saint enjoys the portion in the same degree. In the morning meeting everyone does not enjoy in the same degree what is said or done, but all have a common joy. The youngest babe has the capacity to enjoy, though not as great a capacity as a father. But it is well to see what the Father is doing, what the Father has done. He has a

family of children; the children of God are a real generation in this world and I view the saints as being of that generation.

Nothing has any place in the assembly that is not the outcome of love, and what is the outcome of love edifies. The assembly is the place of divine intelligence. If a babe in Christ took part in the meeting and was sustained by the Lord, he would not go beyond his measure, and all would go with what he said. There is no excuse for people saying what is defective; there is no room in the assembly for that. The assembly is an intelligent company; what a babe said, if kept within his measure, would not be unintelligent. The youngest babe speaks of what he has found and known in divine Persons and everyone can go with it.

Rem I have never heard the kingdom pressed on the affection side before.

CAC The kingdom in affection is most blessed. It is no use to go on to consider Christ as Head if we have not liberated affections; the people who can give thanks to the Father and come into view of the Father's actings are liberated in affections. "Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light". We share all the blessedness of Christ. Then the Father has delivered us from the authority of darkness. We are bound up with Christ for eternity; not a darkening element is left to obscure our joy in the love of the Father. We enjoy as those identified with the place which Christ has before the Father as the Son of His love. Every question is settled: we have redemption, forgiveness of sins, there is perfect liberty. We are brought to a circle where love predominates — the kingdom of the Son of His love — a beautiful aspect of the kingdom. It is the influence of love that liberates from every distraction. The Father sets us free, we are a divine generation, we are liberated from everything that would detain our affections. Now God is going to present a wonderful object, but it is to a people with liberated affections. That object is Christ as Head.

Ques Why is "through his blood" omitted in Colossians (verse 14)?

CAC Because the question of the Person is so much in view. In Ephesians His blood is brought in because it is a question of how we stand with God. Here it is what the Father has done, so the thought of the blood does not come in. Redemption subsists in all the value of the Person who is the Son of His love. The blood has infinite value with God, but the Person has infinite value with the Father. Redemption means that we are put outside the enemy's power, and forgiveness of sins is the settlement of every moral question connected with our former history, so that not a single thing is left to hinder us knowing the blessed Christ as Head. It is the common portion of saints that they enjoy this blessedness. It is the subject of thanksgiving here because of the perfect

liberation which is secured for the affections of the saints; the Father has wrought wondrously that we might be free for Christ. It is lovely to think that the Father would have us to be perfectly free for Christ. Is my heart so free and liberated that there is not a thing to distract me from Christ? If that is so I know what it is to touch the circle of the Father's actings; my heart is full of thanksgiving. Every question has been settled. John says, "Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake". You are in the family of God with every question settled, that you may be free to enjoy the positive divine blessedness into which you are brought. You do not live on the fact that all questions have been settled. That would be like the woman trying to live on the fact that her creditors had been paid! She lived on the rest of the oil. Many saints can thank God that every question is settled, but they do not get farther; they do not know what it is to live on the rest.

COLOSSIANS 1

Colossians 1:12-23

Last week we were speaking of the importance of the aspect of the kingdom presented here, in view of our being set free to entertain the wonderful apprehension of Christ set before us in these verses.

Ques Why do you connect freedom with the kingdom?

CAC The truth of the kingdom comes in to set us free. In Romans the kingdom stands in relation to what we are freed from, but in Colossians it is more what we are free for. The heart is liberated so as to be free to contemplate a new and divine order of things of which Christ is the beginning, the glorious Head and Centre. How could we touch that if our hearts were not free? He "has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love". We are placed, as it were, on the holy mount. It is the Father who has done it. From verse 12 we find ourselves in the sphere of the Father's actings and therefore in an out-of-the-world region. It is like the three disciples on the holy mount; they were in an out-of-the-world condition: they saw the One who was the beloved Son. The Father said to them, "Hear him". That was placing them in the kingdom of the Son of His love, putting them under the influence of His love. There are two lines we love to sing addressing the Lord,

> 'The light of love has shone in Thee,
> And in that love our souls are free'.

Persons who are free can contemplate the greatness of Christ as Head; we cannot do that if there are elements of bondage in our souls. The truth makes us free *from*, but the Son makes us free *in*. It is a great thing to be awake to all that; only persons who are fully awake can see the glory of the kingdom. It says of Peter and the others, "Having fully awoke up they saw his glory". The kingdom is filled with the radiancy of divine light; there is no such shining anywhere else. "His face shone as the sun". Paul said, "I could not see, through the glory of that light". It is only people who are fully awake who can see it.

The kingdom in this sense gives you freedom to enjoy privilege; we shall not touch the assembly unless we know something of the kingdom in that character. There is a kingdom; it exists at the present moment, and it is as real as it will be in the day of glory. Love is supreme there; the very One whose influence we come under is the beloved Son. All the influences there are the

influences of divine love; they set the heart free. We get into bondage to many things because we are not in the region of the Father's actings, and not in the consciousness of divine love. Many things fetter us, impede our movements, and obscure our vision, they would all perish at once if we touch the sphere where the Father is acting and where love predominates. The Father's actings are in view of positive liberty, He "has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light", He "has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love: in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins". That is the platform: the Father has set us free, and now He says, 'I am going to open up the most marvellous vision ever presented to man'. He brings us in view of a new universe. People thought a lot of the discovery of a new world, and men have talked of Columbus ever since, but that new world was nothing to the new world which we are privileged to contemplate tonight.

The idea of "image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation" suggests a new creation, for it carries the mind back to Adam. It has often been remarked — and it is very helpful — that in the first creation the whole system was formed first, and the head — Adam — was introduced last. But in this new universe we begin with the Head. The One who is to be the Centre and Head of it is introduced first, and in getting a clear vision of Him we get understanding of the whole universe which will stand in relation to Him. It is an immense thing to be able to contemplate the greatness of such a Person. If we are free in the light of love we can quietly and without distraction contemplate the exceeding greatness of the Person who is the image of the invisible God — One suitable to take the place of pre-eminence in all creation. What a great thought of Christ is this!

It is God's intention to have a universe, the Head and Centre of which is a Man, the visible representation of what God is. God is invisible, but His purpose was to have a visible image in His universe. To that end a divine Person became Man. In this new universe God will never be in the slightest degree misrepresented. Everything God is in His nature will be fully and perfectly set forth; there will never be the least shadow of misrepresentation. All the troubles that have come in here have been through the misrepresentation of God. Satan came in and the head — Adam — broke down, and what Satan brought in has got a place in this world. All through the history of this world God has been misrepresented. But now there is to be another universe created, and God will never be misrepresented in the slightest degree again. A divine Person has come into manhood that He might be the visible representation and the setting forth of all that God is in that universe for ever. That Man is Head and centre of that new universe. That is

the essence of Paul's gospel, "the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is the image of God", 2 Corinthians 4: 4.

Revelation is one thing and image another. Revelation carries our thoughts back to what the Son was in manhood on earth. He was declaring God and revealing the Father, unveiling that which was unknown in a world of sin. When He went into death all was accomplished and finished and in resurrection He declared the Father's name; the revelation was once for all. The full unfolding of the love of God came out in the death of His Son and the revelation was complete: God is in the light revealed. But the image is what abides, an abiding shining out of all that God is in light and love in a risen and glorified Man. God will always be known by what He has expressed; it shines radiantly in the face of a risen and glorified Man. The light of a new universe shines on us while we are still in the old; it is the light that shone in Paul's heart and it constituted Paul's gospel. If people get the light of the glory that shines in the face of Christ, they get it from Paul, he was the vessel of it, he calls it "my gospel". It shone into Paul's heart so that it might shine forth to us tonight. Christ will irradiate the divine universe with the light of God, and the security of that universe will lie in its Head; nothing will ever dim the shining of all that God is in Him. If Christ had been put in Eden instead of Adam there would have been no breakdown, but in the wisdom of God the natural came first. The true Head was held in reserve, in view of all God's purposes of grace and sovereign love. But He has come in now and we can take account of a creation of which Christ is First-born. The idea of First-born connects the whole creation with Him. It will have a glorious, pre-eminent Head who will be the image of God eternally. When the First-born gets His place God will have His place and not till then.

We are set free in the light of love to entertain the thought of all this, and to see how great that Person is who is Head of the body, the assembly. He stands in a peculiar relation to a unique body of people, and it is the privilege of all those in the body to look up to this great and glorious Person as their Head — "*he* is the head of the body, the assembly".

We get the thought that God is beginning; just as He began with Adam, now He is beginning with Christ. The character of the whole system that stands in relation to Him must be learned in the Head. The character and the security of it is all learned there.

Ques What is the thought of "firstborn of all creation"?

CAC I think it suggests a universe in which Christ has the first place. He is the pre-eminent One: that is the idea of first-born. It has often been said, 'If the Creator takes a place in the creation, He must be First-born'.

Ques Does it refer to His taking flesh?

CAC All that is involved in it. He could not be the image of the invisible God or First-born of all creation except as having come into manhood: it is the dignity attaching to Him as the risen and glorified Man. It goes on to speak of all things being created by Him. It was in the power of His Person that all things were created. It gives one a wonderful thought of His greatness — every conception of dignity that ever came into evidence was created by Him. I do not think it is exactly the material universe here; we get away in this scripture from the material thought. When the details are spoken of, it is "whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or authorities: all things have been created by him". The material universe is not so much in view here as the moral universe. We know He created the material universe, but that is not the point in connection with His greatness as Head; here it is a universe marked by divine order, rule and authority in contrast to lawlessness which has brought in all the trouble in the first creation. Christ has created all these different dignities, and powers, and authorities, which are in contrast to lawlessness. The idea of a king, a prince, a leader, is not a human conception such conceptions are of divine creation. Man may usurp these dignities, or be allowed in God's government to be set in authority for a moment, but they all belong to Christ; they have been created by Him, and in order that He might fill them. In God's universe every expression of rule or authority will be filled out of the fulness of Christ. How wonderful to get hold of that in connection with the Head! The body can look up to that Person and get direction and supplies from Him. These conceptions of rule and authority do not belong to a lawless creation, but to a universe divinely ordered. Christ will fill every position of rule: He is Prince of Peace, Leader of salvation;

every title of dignity and honour that came into being, Christ brought in, so that He might be invested with all the honour of it. It was created for Him. He is the Head of all principality and authority. The present powers in this world are ordained of God for the protection of His people, but they are described in Scripture as beasts: they are unintelligent powers, they carry out His will unintelligently. To think of Christ filling everything gives one an idea of His dignity. If I run down the idea of a king I am detracting from the greatness of Christ. A king is a divine conception, and every idea of glory connected with him belongs to Christ, so I want to have a great idea of a king. It is the same with every dignity — we look at it morally and cherish it in our hearts as belonging to Christ. It may be just now in the hands of the usurper and allowed of God to be so, but it *will* be in the hands of Christ, it belongs to Him. The wrong man is in office just now in the ways of God. God has ordained government; it is one of the greatest mercies in the world. I believe, in spite of

Bolshevism and lawlessness, that authority is going to be divinely supported as long as the church is on earth, because God would not have told His people to pray for kings if there were not to be any to pray for. The prayers of the people of God are the great support of government in this world. One has no idea what tremendous forces of lawlessness there are at work on earth, and yet they are held in check. What is in Russia today might be in England tomorrow if the saints do not pray. I think the security of government in this world lies in the house of God. As long as the house of God is here, government will be maintained and lawlessness kept in check. God will keep His hand upon it, in spite of outbursts, and allow His people to lead peaceable lives as long as the church is on earth. Authority exists for the good of the people of God. The original conception was in the mind of God; the thought of thrones, lordships and authorities did not originate with lawless man — it originated with Christ. It is good to think of Him as Head of all principality and authority.

Then another great conception is, "He is before all". Whatever greatness you see in Scripture or that has ever appeared, Christ is before all. John the baptist was the greatest born of women, but he says of Christ, "He *was* before me". John recognised the pre-eminence of Christ. Take David; Christ was before him, He was the root of David. He was before Abraham; He says, "Before Abraham was, *I* am". He was before Melchisedec. Melchisedec was "assimilated to the Son of God". He was before Adam: Adam was a "figure of him to come". Whatever greatness we see in man, its true origin is in Christ. It shows this Person is before all, He is the source of every kind of greatness. Wherever you see any greatness, Christ is before it, He is pre-eminent in connection with it. "*He* is before all, and all things subsist together by him". He is the bond that holds together every part of the divine working as one whole. What a wonderful book the Scripture is! What is the bond of it? Christ. Take all the ways and workings of God — the promises, the law, the prophets, the Psalms. What is the bond? Christ is the bond that makes them subsist and hold together. A wonderful wide thought that! He is the bond that holds everything in God's universe together. It is all bound together in one subsisting whole by Christ. All things subsist together by Christ; the visible, and the invisible beings. I think the Spirit of God suggests it in relation to Christ as Head, as giving an immense thought of the wonderful resource of wisdom that is in Him. Of course it comes out in the material universe, but it comes out more wonderfully in relation to the moral ways of God. The promises of God are more wonderful than the planets. In the promises, the ways of God, the unfoldings of His mind, sacrifice, government, covenants, etc., we have a great system far more wonderful than the material universe. When we read the law,

the prophets, the Psalms, we see all the divine ways; the moral actings of God are far more wonderful than His material actings; and they all subsist together by Christ. The material has its place as the theatre of all God's moral actings, but the moral is greater. The fact that all are to be reconciled — "by him to reconcile all things" — convinces me that all things are viewed here morally. There is no enmity in a table, or a planet, or a stone, but the universe which is in view here could be at enmity and be reconciled. There has been enmity in heaven on the part of the angels, and on earth on the part of men: man has become an enemy and is alienated in his mind; a moral stain has thus been brought upon heaven and earth, but where there has been enmity there is going to be reconciliation. What a wonderful place Christ holds in the moral universe! It is brought out in this chapter. To get an idea of it, and then think that that Person is the Head of the body, gives one an extraordinary idea of what the body is to have a Head like that.

There will be a universe in reconciliation lighted up by the glory of that Man; everything will be put into perfect accord by Him eternally, by the power that resides in the Head. And now we have the privilege of knowing Him as Head in a peculiar and intimate way. The assembly stands in relation to Him in a way that no other family in the universe ever will. What a resource we have! He is cherished by the body, and He is the source of all supplies and spiritual direction for the body.

COLOSSIANS 1

Colossians 1:17-24

The apostle does not unfold here the gain the body derives from having such a Head: he does that later in chapter 2: 19, "the head, from whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God". In chapter 1 the prominent thought is the greatness of Christ, that He stands in relation to the body as Head. The greatness of the Head is set before us so that we might be affected by it.

It is of great importance to recognise that there is such a thing as the body, a living organism on this earth. We have to apprehend the thought that there is something on earth which is the product of divine working, it is here, whether we see it or not. No doubt the body was intended to be visible so that Christ should be seen in His body. That was the divine thought, though we cannot say much about that now. But the body still exists, it is a definite subsisting thing, the product of divine work, and there never was, nor ever will be, any dead material in it. Christ has pre-eminence in the body, and the dignity and glory of the assembly is that it has such a Head. It is the only company on earth where Christ is pre-eminent. It seems to imply that Christ derives some greatness in being Head to that which is the greatest thing on earth. The body is the only thing purely of God in this world. It is the most wonderful company ever seen, and it is part of the greatness of Christ that He is the Head of that body, the assembly. The body is the only thing on earth capable of appreciating Christ. It is a wonderful thing that there should be a company on earth capable of appreciating Christ; it is the greatest assembly on earth. If we could get all the greatest potentates on earth together they would not be equal to the body, the assembly; there never will be anything so great morally. Every constituent part of it has ability and spiritual intelligence to appreciate Christ; that is the moral greatness of the body. We have to recognise that there is such a company on earth at the present moment; it has not disappeared. If we get a true thought of the body, we could not think of such a thing as sectarianism. One could not think of belonging to a sect when the body is here. It is the only thing on earth in concert with heaven. If we went to heaven we should find Christ the distinguished Person there, on the most distinguished seat. He sits at God's right hand; He is pre-eminent there. And there is a company on earth with the mind of heaven; everyone in that company holds Christ as having the distinguished place; there is no dead material in the body. The connecting link between the Head and the body in a practical sense lies in affection.

Ques Are not the majority of saints in heaven?

CAC Yes, but in the Colossian sense the saints in heaven are not in the body. The truth of the body in Colossians refers to the company on earth — that wonderful assembly, the product of divine working, of which Christ is the Head, and in which He has the chief place.

It is a great thing to entertain the thought of it. You may say, I do not see christians entering into that; but the question is, Do I enter into it? The assembly is the body of persons who gladly and affectionately give Christ the first place, the pre-eminence.

Ques Is that by the Spirit?

CAC It is in virtue of what the Spirit forms. It is in virtue of all those spiritual affections which are the result of the Spirit's work. One would like to cultivate the affections proper to a company that has such a Head; they should be found with us; a company that makes much of Christ is morally the assembly. "The body" speaks of the saints in this vital unity, and "the assembly" speaks of them in their spiritual intelligence. One is delighted to find a trace of the Father's work in souls, a response to Christ: every part of the body is responsive to Christ. There is a company of persons on earth who form "the body, the assembly" and of whom Christ is Head. He has the first — the pre-eminent — place in regard of that company. "The body" is a company of persons in divine vitality, and thus capable of appreciating Christ in His immeasurable greatness, and as "the assembly" they have capacity for spiritual intelligence.

We were speaking in the early part of this chapter of our being brought into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love: as our hearts are affected and brought under the dominating influence of that kingdom, our affections are liberated so that they are free for Christ. A great many christians are not free for Christ. If I am not free of questions about myself, I am not in the good of the kingdom, nor am I free for Christ, or free for the assembly.

Ques Is it like drinking into one Spirit?

CAC In the cup we drink into the love of God, and as we do it sets us free. Nothing sets free like love. In the presence of divine love we are free for Christ, and free to take in the wonderful thoughts which are presented in such a scripture as this. The body, the assembly, is the whole liberated company. Practically many saints are not brought into it, but in the divine mind the assembly is a company of persons in the good and liberty of the kingdom, perfectly free for Christ; that is the body, the assembly. A christian may say, I do not know anything about it, I am not free. Well, it is all there for you.

The Spirit does not appear in this epistle, and we never lose anything by keeping to the line of divine teaching. The babes have the Spirit, and if a person is no further on than just having the Spirit he is a babe. But these Colossians were not babes, they were grown up; there was something there that the Spirit had formed, divine formation.

One feature of Christ's glory is that He is Head of that wonderful company which is the product of divine working, and which has divine vitality and intelligence.

Then we get another thing, He "is the beginning, first-born from among the dead": He is the starting-point of everything. If we get the apprehension of Christ as the Beginning, it puts us outside the world. We were saying in connection with the previous verses, that we were brought into the region of the Father's actings, and when we touch that circle we are outside the world, we are in a new system of things, and in that new system Christ is the Beginning, the starting-point of everything. Anything that does not begin with Christ has no part in that new order of things.

Ques Is the Beginning one thing and the First-born another?

CAC They are closely linked together. The One who is the Beginning is also the First-born from among the dead. He is the Beginning — the starting-point of all God's thoughts and ways in the new universe which God is going to bring in. But He must needs be the First-born from the dead, for the new universe will stand on a resurrection footing. Saints on earth in the millennium will not be risen with Christ, but they will know Him as risen. I doubt whether any saints other than the assembly will ever be risen with Christ. But the fact that He is risen will prove that death is swallowed up in victory. Millennial saints will be relieved of the presence of death through His resurrection. Hezekiah is a figure of this.

In the first creation Christ was the starting-point; we see it in Proverbs 8. The creation of the heavens and earth was in the divine mind to form a theatre for the display of Christ. "In the beginning was the Word", John 1. He was the beginning, not Adam. Whatever you think of, Christ was before it. The whole order of the universe subsists together by Christ. It is perfectly marvellous to think of His greatness; even in the domain of death He has the first place: He was First-born from among the dead; He has the first place in relation to that. Wherever you look at Him He has the first place.

This wonderful Person has come into death, but He came there in order to acquire a new glory, He has now the glory of being First-born from among the dead. Instead of death being able to rob Him of glory, it has added a glory to

Him which He did not possess before. Death robs every other man of every bit of His glory, no matter how great he is. But here we see a Man who goes into death, and instead of being robbed of His glory, He actually acquires a new glory — He never was before First-born from the dead. It has given Him the first place in relation to resurrection; it has brought out His glory, and given Him an added glory. To reach an order of things that begins with a risen Man puts us completely outside this world. Fancy a risen Man coming back into Teignmouth! No-one would know what to do with Him! If we came under the influence of all this we should be completely spoiled for man's world; we should not be of it in spirit any more than He is. We are linked up with this Person in the purpose of God, and in faith and affection as having the Spirit.

What a relief it is to come among the saints! Many have to spend much of their time in contact with the world in shops or offices, etc. There may be nice people there, but in people of the world there is no appreciation of Christ. But when you come amongst the saints, even the most illiterate and the least spiritual, you come to a most blessed company, because they appreciate Christ. They speak well of Christ, they sing of Him, they praise God for Him. That is what makes them glorious in the eyes of a spiritual person.

We reach a climax when we read, "In him all the fulness ... was pleased to dwell". The fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Him. When the Lord was here, the Father was here, and the Spirit was here. The fulness of the Godhead was *pleased* to be here; everything belonging to the Godhead was here. No one could have said it was only the Son who was here. The Father was there dwelling in Him: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father". And the Spirit was there; everything He did was done under the power of the anointing. All the fulness of the Godhead was expressed; there was nothing of the Godhead that could be known that was not expressed in Him. All dwelt in Him as Man.

I think the Father dwelling in Him and the Spirit resting on Him were in view of His service. It is never wise for us to speculate outside Scripture; we are sure to get into error if we do. I am thankful for the divine wisdom which has presented things to us in the way we can apprehend them. They were presented by the Lord to His disciples in a way they could apprehend them; and they are very simple. "He that has seen me has seen the Father". "The Father who abides in me, *he* does the works". If we see the Lord healing a person, raising the dead, we know there was all the grace of the Father expressed in it.

He was never less than what He was; He was the Son come into manhood. When He was about to be made manifest to Israel, He was anointed, the Spirit

of Jehovah rested upon Him; in coming out into public service He took it up in the power of the Spirit. Not only was the Son there, but as Man He was anointed with the Spirit, and the Father dwelt in Him. The fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Him, and all was in view of reconciliation being effected.

COLOSSIANS 1

Colossians 1:19-29

CAC It will help us if we keep definitely in view that the Spirit of God is engaging us here with the greatness of Christ; it is not our blessings, however great they may be, but the greatness of Christ. We have seen His greatness in connection with creation, and His greatness as Head of the body, the assembly; and His greatness in the fact that the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him, and now we come to His greatness as the One by whom reconciliation is effected. He is so great that by Him the Fulness can reconcile all things to Itself.

Ques How do we understand all things reconciled to the Godhead?

CAC The fact that reconciliation is needed, and has to be effected, suggests that something has come in which has caused a breach like the wife who has been separated from her husband in 1 Corinthians 7: 11. Something has come in that is offensive to the Godhead; it is not only that the creature is ruined. The Father, Son and Spirit are all included in the fulness of the Godhead; and something has come in offensive to each Person in the Godhead. A moral stain has come in which has disturbed the repose of the Godhead. It is a solemn thing. It is not only that the creature has fallen and is ruined, but the peace of the Godhead has been disturbed. Reconciliation comes in in order that all that might be removed, and the greatness of Christ comes out in the fact that He is the One by whom the fulness of the Godhead effects reconciliation. He is great enough to put all on a new footing with the Godhead. He has come into manhood in order to do so. The thing is done "through him". How pleasurable it must be to the Godhead! It is not only that the stain is removed, but it is removed *by Him*. Lawlessness has worked in heaven in Satan and his angels. The very fact that such a dreadful thing has been in heaven has left a moral stain there. I wonder if we all understand what a moral stain is. Suppose a murder was committed in my house, would not a moral stain be left? Many persons would not live in a house where a murder had been committed; they would feel a moral stain there. Suppose such a thing happened, no creature could remove the stain, but God could. Nothing that any human being could do could remove the stain left by a terrible crime, but God could remove it, and reconciliation is the removal of every moral stain, and Christ is great enough to do it. All the kings or great ones in the world together could not remove the moral stain of murder, but Christ would remove every moral stain from earth and heaven — that is reconciliation. He has died so that earth and heaven might come on to a new footing. It is now *Christ* — His blood, His

cross. The Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done as in heaven so upon the earth", could never have been answered if reconciliation had not been effected! It is the sacrificial basis on which all the pleasure of God rests in heaven and earth. Christ is great enough to secure a basis on which the repose and pleasure of the Godhead rest eternally in regard to heaven and earth. The fulness of the Godhead has accomplished reconciliation in the Son, in Christ. Satan and his angels will be cast out of heaven, the scene will be cleared so that not a bit of lawlessness will be left in heaven. God will clear the scene on earth, too, and all on the ground that Christ has died. He is great enough to remove in sacrifice the moral stain before God. God can look down on the world and think of the death of Christ. This great and glorious Person has done it. It is His greatness and gloriousness that makes it so precious.

The whole creation of which Adam was the head came under the effect of Adam's fall, so a moral stain was on the whole scene and the repose of the Godhead was disturbed. The Lord said, "My Father worketh hitherto and *I* work". There was no repose for the Godhead.

Reconciliation has been effected from the divine side; the Fulness effects it. There is nothing whatever required on the side of the creature but faith. We have to have faith in what the Fulness has done — that is the great gospel testimony. Paul had the place of being an ambassador for Christ and God; he had the ministry of reconciliation. Everybody now can be called to reconciliation; for it has been effected by the fulness of the Godhead in the death of Christ. All men are invited now to come into it, they are besought to be reconciled to God. "We are making our boast in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom now we have received the reconciliation", Romans 5: 11. It is a wonderful thing to have received it. It is difficult to get hold of the idea, as we naturally think of it as something effected in us, but it is something effected by the fulness of the Godhead in Christ. It is always put that way in Scripture. A divine Person came into manhood, and in that divine Person was the fulness of the Godhead — the Father and the Spirit were there as well as the Son — and He came into manhood to effect reconciliation, and He could only do it by going down into death. In the early part of the chapter we are told that all dignities were created by and for Him. He created all dignities, and yet when it was a question of reconciliation He had to pass by every place of dignity and go down to the cross. I think *the cross* is brought in here and in Ephesians to show that everything has been brought about through that which is most ignominious in men's eyes. The Fulness made peace by blood. It is a peace secured by sacrifice, by death, but not a grand death — a death of a character most revolting and degraded in men's eyes — "the blood of his cross". It has been done at the very lowest place in which a

man could be found on earth. There is no lower place than a cross. Now it makes nothing of all that would puff man up! But if everything for God's pleasure depended on a Man having His blood shed upon the cross it puts all on the footing of death. There is no puffing up there. The danger at Colosse was that some were "vainly puffed up by the mind of" their flesh. But the cross is man at the lowest point. I do not say that we have to come there to get blessing, but we have to see that *Christ* came there. This will take the puffing up out of us. He "made ... purification of sins", Hebrews 1: 3. That means that He cleared sins away from before God, He removed them away from the Godhead. We know whose sins were removed, but the point is they were removed from before the Godhead.

Ques Is His making peace different from reconciliation?

CAC It is bound up in reconciliation. Everything is taken away sacrificially. Through death, through blood-shedding, everything is taken away that could disturb the repose of the Godhead. It is not here a question of securing peace for sinners, it is not peace *with* God here, but the peace of the Godhead. In Ephesians 2 it is peace between Jew and gentile: "*he* is our peace". He has brought Jew and gentile into peace, there is no enmity left between them; and if Christ has His place with us there is no enmity left between us. What a blessed end of all discord between man and man! Another Man is brought in who displaces both, and becomes their peace. There were two men at daggers drawn, and the Jew says, I am nothing, I have been ended in the cross of Christ. The gentile says, I am nothing, I am removed in the death of Christ. What remains? Only Christ. All the privileges of the Jew have gone, all the disabilities of the gentiles have gone in that death, and Christ is our peace; there is nothing left to make discord.

Here in Colossians it is the peace of the Godhead. One loves to think of the Godhead as now in repose in regard to all the sin and lawlessness which came in in heaven and earth.

'In Him all the Fulness was pleased to dwell' is the correct translation — it is what He was here on earth in flesh. In chapter 2: 9 the fulness dwells bodily in a risen and glorified Man. We see the Father in Him and the Spirit in Him, too.

It is wonderful to think that everything has been put on a new footing for God through Christ having come down here and died. That has to be received by faith; it is not a matter of attainment or growing up to it. Anyone here is privileged to receive it tonight if they never have received it before.

The Spirit of God in verse 21 turns to the only company that has come into reconciliation. There is only one company which can be definitely said to be reconciled, and that is the assembly. You could not say that any but believers were reconciled. It is like justification, which is in the mind of God for everybody. Every man *can* be justified, it can be preached in the gospel that God is the Justifier, but no man *is* justified till he has faith. It can be said of all believers who have faith, 'You hath He reconciled'. We know what the state was in which we were found, "alienated and enemies in mind" — our alienation from God manifested itself in a practical way in wicked works. Now the Fulness — the Father, Son and Spirit — has acted, and it can be said of every believer that he is reconciled. The Father, Son and Spirit have reconciled every believer, and it is "in the body of his flesh through death". All that we were as in alienation has disappeared from God's view through Christ's death. But this is in view of the saints being presented "holy and unblamable and irreproachable" before the Fulness of the Godhead. What a wonderful thing to sit quietly and let into our souls that the Father, Son and Spirit through the death of Christ have so cleared away everything unsuited to Them that we can be presented to the Father, Son and Spirit "holy, unblamable, and irreproachable". That is the gospel. Now are we really on that footing with the Godhead? What is the footing that exists at the present moment? It witnesses the greatness of Christ. If we are not on that footing we are not giving Christ the glory that is due to Him. We are not honouring the Fulness.

Ques What is the difference between justification and reconciliation?

CAC Justification is that I am cleared from every charge. In Christ we are justified from all things: "Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect. It is God who justifies", Romans 8: 33. Every charge has been met. Justification is that you are justified *from* all things, justified from sins and offences. But reconciliation is *for* something; we are reconciled to be presented "holy and unblamable and irreproachable" before the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. How it sets our hearts free! We can be presented to the fulness of the Godhead in a faultless condition, through what has been effected by divine Persons.

Ques Is reconciliation like Luke 15?

CAC We get in Luke 15 what goes beyond it — the prodigal covered with kisses. What we get here is more on the line of moral suitability to the Godhead — being presented "holy and unblamable and irreproachable". That is not so far as being covered with kisses: the prodigal is brought into the embrace of love, into sonship. Reconciliation is the basis on which the whole pleasure of the Godhead can be carried out, it is the basis of all the blessings in Luke 15.

If you talk to people you find they are occupied with their failures, inconsistencies and defects. That all shows they are not in the faith of reconciliation. It is just there the 'if' comes in; we are so soon moved away. "*If* indeed ye abide in the faith founded and firm, and not moved away from the hope of the glad tidings, which ye have heard, which have been proclaimed in the whole creation which is under heaven, of which *I* Paul became minister". The fact is that practically many of us do not abide in the faith, and we get moved away from the hope of the glad tidings, and so the blessing of reconciliation is not enjoyed. It is only maintained as we abide in the faith and are not moved away from the hope of the glad tidings. The hope of the glad tidings is that I shall be like Christ. I often think that, if one's first thought on waking were, I am going to be like Christ, what a start for the day it would be! It is not merely I would like to be like Christ, but I am going to be like Christ for the pleasure of God. If one had the light of that one would be very careful about allowing what is of the flesh. All this was brought in to take the Colossians away from any allowance of the flesh. If we have received the reconciliation, a divine Person is before us, another Man; and we are going to be like Him, on the same footing as He is before God.

In this epistle God is leading the saints on to the ground of being risen with Christ, but before we come to that ground we have to see what the fulness of the Godhead has effected, and to get our vision filled with Christ. The faith of the gospel occupies us entirely with Christ; not some of Christ and some of self but altogether Christ. We are not to be moved away from the faith of the glad tidings.

Ques What is continuing in the faith?

CAC The faith here is the faith of this wonderful Person, and of the reconciliation which the Fulness has effected by Him. We are not to be moved away from the faith of that.

Ques Why is it "the whole creation" that it is preached in?

CAC That gives the scope of it; it is not limited to saints, but is for the whole creation. Anybody can come into reconciliation, can have the faith of Christ now.

What we get here is the light of what is above the sun, of what is in heaven, and of that wonderful Person now in heaven. "Seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God", chapter 3: 1. All is connected with things above the sun, but known in the hearts of believers in this world. It is marvellous what God has brought about; but this is the gospel. It is especially Paul's gospel.

From verse 24 to the end Paul passes on to the assembly, "of which *I* became minister". He was not only minister of the gospel but minister of the assembly. He brought out the full truth of the gospel and of the assembly — he was minister of both.

Christ had suffered for the assembly, and Paul continued on that line. The sufferings for the assembly did not end with Christ, they were continued in the apostle Paul; he was allowed the privilege in a special way of suffering for the assembly, and he says, "I rejoice in sufferings for you, and I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for his body, which is the assembly". Paul was ready to suffer anything so that Christ might secure a place in the hearts of the gentiles. If he had been content to confine Christ to the Jews he would not have been persecuted. It was because he was carrying Christ to the gentiles that they persecuted him; his sufferings were in a peculiar way for the gentile assembly, and he was prepared to suffer so that Christ might have a place in their hearts. The character of the mystery here is "Christ in you the hope of glory". It is Christ in the hearts of the saints, Christ in their affections. It is not Christ formed in us, but Christ in the affections.

Ques Does not every servant suffer for the assembly?

CAC No doubt there is a measure of suffering connected with all true service to the assembly, but no one else was privileged to suffer for the assembly as Paul did. He had the ministry of the assembly and had to suffer in a peculiar way for it akin to the sufferings of Christ. There was a character of suffering for the church left behind, and Paul took it up and filled it up; and being filled up in Paul there is none left.

The thought of the body is a living organism every part of which is appreciative of Christ. Christ is in the affections of every one who is a member of His body: that is the special form of the mystery here — a vast gentile company and Christ in the affections of each one in it.

Ques Is it the same as "Ye in me, and I in you", John 14: 20?

CAC That is the special activity of the Spirit to make us know that Christ is in the affections of the Father, the church in the affections of Christ, and Christ in the affections of the saints. It is a beautiful threefold cord; we are bound up in affection with divine Persons. The mystery here is that the Christ, who is hidden in heaven, is hidden in the affections of millions in this world, and gentiles, too. The church treasures Christ in her affections; everyone in the body has Christ in the heart. Is Christ in your heart? If He is, you are in the body. Queen Mary was greatly taken up with Calais, and she said that after her death they would find Calais written in her heart! If we could get to the

heart of anyone belonging to the body we should find Christ there. The body is a living organism, and Christ is in the affections of everyone who is part of it, that is the mystery. Paul laboured, and his ministry was all to the end that Christ should be in the affections of His saints. All ministry in the power of the Spirit is to that end.

COLOSSIANS 1 AND 2

Colossians 1:24-29; Colossians 2:1-10

CAC What is the thought of completing the word of God?

ALM I understood it to mean the completeness of the revelation of God. The unfolding of the mystery is the great thing God has before Him. It is wonderful that God should leave the masterpiece of His counsels and works as the last thing to be revealed.

CAC The greatest, and richest, and best of everything is to be known at the present moment; that is the body, the assembly. God is distinguishing this present time in a remarkable way: while Christ is hidden in the heavens the body is here, a vital organism, every part of which responds to Christ. The body in chapter 1 is the assembly to hold Christ in intelligent affections; not exactly yet to express Him, but the vessel to hold Him in living and intelligent affections. It is good to think of the saints as being able to cherish Christ. We come to the expression of Christ in chapter 3; He is expressed in His body, but He must be held and cherished in the affections before He can be expressed. If we do not apprehend Christ we cannot cherish Him. The labour of the apostle was that Christ might be apprehended; all that Christ is becomes the subject of ministry, so that He may be intelligently apprehended. The body, the assembly, is a company in the eye of God capable of apprehending and holding Christ and cherishing Him in their affections. The coming to light through Paul's ministry of such a company was needed "to complete the word of God". The counsel of God included the assembly, but it was an unspoken thing until it was given to Paul as a dispensation of God. The most glorious thing of all had been held in reserve until Christ took His place at the right hand of God. Something now came to light greater than the thought of the kingdom.

"Christ in you" gives you the thought. Christ, who is hidden in the heavens, is also hidden and cherished in the affections of a gentile company, so that they know what "glory" will be, because the One who will bring it in is in their hearts. Everyone who cherishes and appreciates Christ is in the body, that wonderful living organism which is actually on earth at this moment. He becomes the life of the saints while He is hidden in heaven. He is in them as having a place in their affections.

Rem Many connected with it have no conception of their privilege and distinction.

CAC That is where ministry comes in, that they may know it. In this chapter the divine work is not exactly in the saints but in the servant. "Whereunto also I toil, combating according to his working, which works in me in power". There is a divine work in the apostle in order that the saints might come in to the intelligence of these things. This is a question of what is announced and taught in all wisdom. It is what is ministered, so that Christ may be apprehended by every man as the anointed Man of God's pleasure.

Ques Is the exercise shared by others, or is it exclusively the apostle?

CAC I think it is peculiar to the apostle; he was the minister of the assembly; there was a divine work in Paul that there never was in any other. The very fact that we have this epistle is the abiding evidence of the power of the divine work in Paul. Verse 28 is the apostolic "we".

The apostle was labouring that everyone might be full grown in the apprehension of Christ, that there might be no want of maturity in their apprehension of Christ, the accepted Man, the object of divine pleasure. All the pleasure of God centres in that one Man, and we are perfect in Him; we have to come to the apprehension of that. He is the anointed Man; every other man has disappeared from God's account. The apostle laboured that every man might be presented perfect in Christ; that is, in the apprehension of Christ as the anointed Man for the pleasure of God, so that there might be no haziness or uncertainty as to which Man is accepted. Everything is made of God's anointed Man. That every man should be brought to the apprehension of it is the toil of the servant, and God's working is in the servant in this scripture. The servant had a definite objective in view, and a sense of the powers that had to be overcome.

It is Christ as presented in this chapter who is to be in the saints. The wonderful Person whom we have been considering as set forth in the early part of the chapter is to be in the affections of the saints — that is the mystery. There is no word in the Old Testament about a gentile company cherishing Christ while He is hid in the heavens. There may be types and figures in the Old Testament, but it has been hid from ages and generations, it could not be known till the riches of the glory of this mystery were opened out.

Ques What is the hope of glory?

CAC I think the saints understand what the glory will be because Christ is in their affections. The very One who brings in the glory is in the affections of the saints.

ALM Everything will be permeated with the glory of Christ. At the present time Christ is in the saints, so what will fill the universe fills the hearts of the saints.

CAC All that will be manifested in glory is present to the hope of the saints as they cherish Christ. Glory is all centred in Christ and what He will bring in. That is why the Spirit and the bride say "Come" — they know the Person who is coming and all that He will bring with Him.

ALM The prospect in Romans 5, rejoicing "in hope of the glory of God", is realised here.

CAC In Romans God is the subject. We believe on God, have peace with God, access into the favour of God, boast in hope of the glory of God. God is the prominent thought there. But in Colossians it is the anointed Man who will fill the scene of glory; it is another aspect of the same scene. The great point in Colossians is Christ. What sort of scene will it be when Christ fills everything? All in the anointed Man will be brought out and manifested and made to shine. The body, the assembly, has it all in hope in having Christ in its affections. The church will have a peculiar place in that scene of glory.

The great labour of the apostle, and the divine working in him, was that every man might come to the apprehension of Christ — it is a wide scope. The Colossians were warned against the things which would delude them from Christ.

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory". Christ is going to appear, and that has become light to His saints before He appears. There is no uncertainty about hope in Scripture: it is not as we say, I hope so, when we are not quite sure. We use it in a doubtful sense, but Scripture never uses it that way.

Ques What is the nature of the conflict which the apostle speaks of in the next chapter?

CAC There are two sides to the battle. There is the side of ministry in chapter 1. Paul says in the last verse, "Whereunto also I toil, combating" — that is in the ministry.

Then in chapter 2: 1 he says, "For I would have you know what combat I have for you" — that is in prayer. It is a real battle to get the saints to give Christ His rightful place in their hearts. Ministry is a battle, not a review.

Ques Would you use the expression 'exercise' in that way?

CAC Yes, it is a very intense form of exercise because there is a great hostile power. If a man gets up to minister Christ he ought to have a definite object in

view, not just what comes into his head at the moment, just as a general in the field of battle means to reach a certain point. The minister recognises the tremendous power of opposition, so the ministry is a combat. And when the apostle prayed he realised what a fearful power of opposition there was to everything he prayed about; he prayed in the sense that he was up against the power of the enemy. He wanted the Colossians to understand this, and he wants us to know about it, too; he had this agony about us, too. The fact that he had become minister of the assembly gave him a universal outlook and exercise.

Ques Would the prayer meeting be on the same line?

CAC Yes, I think combating in prayer comes in there. Everything that moves for God in this world moves in the face of all the combating forces of evil; it is a hostile scene and every movement is in the nature of a combat, there is nothing easy about it. The Philippians were well drilled troops, they had a good start. What a fine lesson it was for them to know about Paul's experiences in prison. The jailor might have become a leading brother, and no doubt he told them all about it: they would realise then what it was for Paul to bring them the gospel. There is a great difference between a review and a battle. There is not much blood shed in a review, but there is plenty on a battlefield. It was not much like a review at Philippi.

It is remarkable that there should be all this combat in prayer about the saints that their hearts might be encouraged; that was what he was combating about, "to the end that their hearts might be encouraged". It would indicate that the power of the enemy is set on discouraging the saints.

Ques In what way does he do it?

CAC I suppose by getting the eye off divine Persons. One who has divine Persons in view would not be discouraged by anything. We may fall under the power of the enemy and not recognise who he is. If we get occupied with evil we lose power. God would never have us occupied with evil so as to be discouraged. Satan would try to occupy us with the weakness and failure of others, or even with our own, so as to discourage us. A discouraged assembly is no good. A proclamation went throughout the camp when Israel went to war, which said, If any man's heart failed him he was to go home to his wife and family, or his brother's heart would fail too. A discouraged man is no good. The most courageous of all Paul's epistles is 2 Timothy: he was faced then with the break-up and failure of the assembly; he was about to go off the scene himself and was leaving a weak man behind, and yet he was not discouraged. The first mark of the power of God among His people is that their hearts are encouraged; that is a sure mark that God is with His people.

We should carry with us what is encouraging. Some people depress you, because they have always got before them some failure or wrong. I want divine Persons before me, and I like to come across brothers or sisters who have divine Persons and the things of God and of Christ before them. There is no knitting together if people are discouraged; discouraged hearts tend to scatter, but when hearts are encouraged there is a power to unite together in love. As Christ is brought in there is that which we can unite on, and then there can be increase in wealth of understanding. These are the things Paul agonised about: he wanted the saints' hearts encouraged so that they might be knit together, and then they would have intelligence and know all these wonderful things. If our hearts are encouraged and knit together in love we shall get the full assurance of understanding as to the mystery of God. The mystery of God is a very wide thought; it is the greatest thing we can think of: it goes far beyond the church. It is not now in display, it is hidden, and only known to people with encouraged hearts, who are knit together in love. Such people get to know all that God is going to bring into display in the world to come. The mystery of God is the accomplishment of all His counsels in regard to every family. It includes the church, and every family that God is going to bless; it is all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, there is nothing outside it. If it were only the church there would be something outside it because the blessing of Israel is outside the church. But the mystery includes *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge: there is absolutely nothing outside it. The mystery will be unveiled when the city comes down.

> 'Radiant hearts for ever share
> The unveiled mystery'. (74:7)

That is not the church only, it is the whole mystery of God. God has wonderful thoughts that He has been cherishing from eternity; they are all as yet in mystery, they are not known to the public — that is what mystery means. His thoughts are only known by those who go into the temple; it is a temple idea. We go in there to be initiated; the mystery of God is known in His temple for the joy of saints before a single part of it comes into display. It should make one absolutely independent of every proposition that can come to us from the world. People bring pretentious things before us, and talk about the wonderful discoveries of science, and the development of light and understanding in regard to this, that, and the other! They talk of philosophy and the ability to penetrate into unseen things, and I know not what; but the christian is made far superior to all these things, for he has the knowledge of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All these things which men talk about do not make them happy or give any pleasure to God. But when we come to the mystery all

in it is for God's pleasure and for the supreme happiness of His creature. What are all the books in the bookshops? They are like foam on the waves, or smoke from the chimney, compared with the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in the mystery of God! Christians sometimes think they must have light reading, and many of them have not read their Bibles through! We ought to be deeply exercised about these things.

COLOSSIANS 2

Colossians 2:4-23

ALM What was the immediate cause of the apostle writing this epistle?

CAC It appears from verses 4 and 8 that there was some danger threatening, an effort to take them away from Christ so that God might not any longer have His pleasure in them.

ALM The great object of the Spirit's work in us is that God might have pleasure in His people.

CAC A good deal in the Colossians was very beautiful as far as it went. The apostle could speak in verse 5 of "rejoicing and seeing your order". I suppose that would mean that they stood in the good of 1 Corinthians — that is the epistle of order.

ALM The danger lay in the object of the enemy, which was to get them occupied with another object rather than Christ.

CAC Yes, it is necessary not only to receive Christ but to walk in Him.

ALM What does that mean?

CAC Receiving the Christ is the commencement of an entirely new kind of movement. It is receiving the anointed Man, the Man who is pleasurable to God; and now the great thing is that all the movement among the saints should be in Him. If we made everything of what makes much of Christ, there would be no room left for the intrusion of what pertains to any other man.

Ques Why is it "*the* Christ"?

CAC I thought it was that they had received *the Christ*, not only the Saviour. They had received the Christ as the One in whom all God's pleasure is centred: it is not only all blessing for themselves but all the pleasure of God is in the anointed One.

ALM "As therefore ye have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord". We have come now to a new order of man, a new power and a new authority, everything complete in Him. It is not their eternal security, but the saints are put on the line of a new order of being down here.

CAC They were to continue on the line of the work of God. It had brought them to firm faith in Christ; they had been rooted in Christ, firmly fixed by the divine work in the truth of the Christ as the object of divine pleasure, and now they were not to be turned aside from that: they were to continue to walk in Him. The danger was that elements of philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of

men and the elements of the world might be brought in. The enemy would tell them that there were wonderful things to be learnt besides Christ, and additional to Him; that Christ was all very well, but they must have room in their minds for other things; in that way he would rob them of Christ.

Ques Had they understood something of the church in the wilderness and now the apostle is seeking to show them the heavenly position?

CAC Yes, they were in the good of the two epistles to the Corinthians. The first is the epistle of assembly order in the wilderness; and in the second epistle the saints are looked at as firmly attached to Christ by divine power. The apostle says, "I am ... rejoicing and seeing your order" that is the first epistle — "and the firmness of your faith in Christ", that is like the second epistle. Now the object of the Spirit of God in this epistle to the Colossians was to bring them to the truth of being risen with Christ, a new position with God. It is not a wilderness position but a position over Jordan. It is a wonderful thing to be not only rooted in Christ, but built up in Him; it is the proper gain of the assembly. 'Rooted' is what has been done; it is the soul firmly fixed in Christ by the work of God; something like the 'firmly attached to Christ' of 2 Corinthians 1: 21, New Translation note. Then there is the being built up in Him — a present or continuous thing. That is the normal gain of saints as in divine order, and as having faith in Christ. Our meetings, our intercourse, our reading, our prayers, all further a continuous building up in Christ, and thus we are confirmed in the faith, so that souls are firm in what they have been taught, and there is abounding thanksgiving. When thanksgiving fails, the enemy gets his chance. When you see the saints with miserable faces, and full of complaints, you may depend that God is not getting much in the way of thanksgiving.

There is a continual acting of divine power and grace building up the saints in Christ: that is the Man we are to be built up in. It is not the man here, who is the Adam man, but the Man at the right hand of God. As built up in that Man we are prepared to be severed from the man here — that is in circumcision and baptism. There is circumcision, burial, resurrection and quickening — all in the light of Christ and being built up in Him; so we find we are entirely independent of the world and of every man that is in it.

ALM Would you say something about the corporate character of this epistle?

CAC It speaks of the saints as the body, that living organism in which every part is appreciative of Christ. There is a company of persons in this world, a great living organism, the product of divine work, and every one forming part of it appreciates and cherishes Christ. He is the object of desire to every one in the body. It is a corporate idea because every saint who has the Spirit forms

part of the body. Christ is rejected by this world but there is a company by whom He is cherished and valued, and who have a true thought of Him "the riches of the glory of this mystery ... which is Christ in you the hope of glory". That is the place Christ has, a place in the affections of the saints.

The danger is that the enemy may bring something in which would steal our hearts from Christ. It does not matter how good it is if it is not Christ. Whatever influence there may be of this kind is exposed in this one fact that it is not according to Christ.

ALM If we look around we do not see much appreciation of Christ in believers.

CAC I think there may be many believers in Jesus who have not received the Christ. The majority of converted people in the world have not received the Christ: they believe in Jesus, they know He died for them, and bore their sins, and trusting in His merits they believe they will go to heaven when they die; but receiving the Christ is another thing altogether. The saints in Colosse had Christ ministered to them as God's anointed, the object of His pleasure: all God's pleasure centred in that Man. No other man but Christ is of any value to God; the most religious man in this world, the best man, is a complete moral wreck. Christ is the Man of God's delight, and if Christ has a place in the heart there is something for God: that is a delight to God, not what man is in himself. The body is made up of those who appreciate Christ, attach value to Him and make much of Him, and think nothing of any other man. "The body is of Christ". There is a company of persons in this world by the powerful working of God who do think something, if not very adequately, of the preciousness and worthiness and sufficiency of Christ; and that company is the body. It is an immense thing to receive the Christ: it is another order of man altogether. Christ, the anointed Man, is the great contrast to Adam. We all know the kind of man Adam is; we have all derived from Adam. All the moral qualities of men of this world — the natural qualities, intelligence, ability — are derived from Adam, but that man has fallen and been rejected of God. Now there is another Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came into this world as a man: He has been to the cross, and has gone as the risen and glorified Man to the right hand of God. He is the object of God's pleasure. God has made Him known and given hearts in this world to receive Him: many have received Him as the object of divine and eternal pleasure, and those who have received Him constitute His body. Now the great thing is to be built up continuously in Christ, and not to be diverted from Him by religious traditions, or any elements of this world. We are to be continually built up in Christ — that is the saints walking together in Christ. We walk together as christians that we may build each other up in Christ. I trust we are walking in Him

tonight as we sit together over the word, and that there is a desire in every heart that we may think, and learn, and know more of Christ, and be built up in Him. If we are walking in Him tonight let us keep it up. We have to do our work at home or in the office or shop, but all the inward movements of our souls are connected with Christ, we walk in Him.

Ques Why does it say, "Jesus the Lord"?

CAC That brings in lordship as well as headship; we need Him as Lord as well as Head. We have to take up everything here in the Lord; business and natural relationships are all to be taken up in the Lord; they are only carried out rightly as the Lord is before us. The great standard of conduct for this world is that we should all have the Lord before us and be in subjection to Him. If I have the Lord before me I have to be in subjection to His will. I have to be concerned that the way I do things is to stand the test of the Lord's presence, for I am a servant under lordship. If not right in lordship, I shall not know much about headship.

We are tested in going on together as to whether we desire to make everything of Christ and to walk in Him. A thousand and one things can easily come in so that the object practically ceases to be Christ.

Ques Is the thought of being descriptive of Him in chapter 3?

CAC Yes, the order of it is that in chapter 1 Christ is in the saints; that means He has a place in their affections. Chapter 2 comes in as a warning against being diverted from Christ by some moral or religious influence which is not Christ. Chapter 3 brings us to being descriptive of Christ; the saints are to put on the beautiful features of Christ. They are looked at as dead and risen with Christ; they have put off the old and put on the new man, and they are to clothe themselves with the beautiful features of Christ for the pleasure of God. Then they become descriptive of Christ. It is all the result of divine operation; there would have been nobody here if there had not been divine operation. On this line saints can abound in thanksgiving: they become confirmed in faith and abound in thanksgiving (verse 7). There is a constant stream of thanksgiving to God because of Christ.

The Spirit hides Himself in this epistle behind His work. His work is to magnify Christ, to make everything of Christ. This epistle is full of Christ.

Ques What is holding the Head?

CAC The most essential thing in Christianity is to hold the Head. If we do not hold the Head we do not know anything about Christianity.

ALM How is all this worked out practically?

CAC The first chapter brings before us the greatness of the Head; and holding the Head is to preserve a firm grasp of all Christ is as presented in this epistle. We have a firm grip on it, and constantly look up to Him with reverence and affection as the source of supply to the body. There is no source of supply to the body but the Head; He is the source of all nourishment and direction for the body. To hold the Head is to hold that in our affections all the time. Think of the statement here, "For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". What a marvellous statement — all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in a Man with a human body at the right hand of God! All the fulness of the Godhead is in that Man; nothing will ever be discovered about the Godhead through all eternity which is not expressed in that Man. What a wonderful Person to get before the soul! Think of all the blessedness of the Father, Son and Spirit, all that is adequate to set forth the Godhead — subsisting in that glorified Man in a body! It takes away from any vague thought of a spirit — it is a Man with a body.

Then we are filled full in Him who is the Head. What can saints who are filled full in Him want from any other source! There is no knowledge of God outside Christ; there is no expression of God in His universe outside Christ — the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. You cannot add anything on that line: there is no addition to Christ. On the other hand how are we set up in presence of the Godhead? "Complete in him who is the head of all principality and authority". The Head is an infinitude of blessedness, and the saints as deriving from Him are filled full in Him. We have to learn that fulness; it is all there for our appropriation. It does not say He is Head merely for us, but Head of all principality and authority. There is not a dignity in the moral universe which will not derive everything from Christ; He is our Head. God's universe is an ordered system; it is marked by rule, authority, and various dignities. All this is for the pleasure of God, and Christ is Head of all. The most exalted dignities in the universe will take character from Christ — all will have to draw their dignity and character from Christ. He is going to fill everything so that it will be fully for the pleasure of God. He is great enough to do it. It is striking that this aspect of His headship should be brought in here. It is to give the illimitable scope of His fulness as that in which the saints are filled full, and it is brought in to prepare us to accept circumcision — the complete cutting off of the flesh. No one will accept circumcision if he does not know what it is to be filled full in Christ. Circumcision means the putting off of the body of the flesh; that is, everything that belongs to me as a man in the flesh living in this world has to be put off not actually, but in mind and spirit. All has to be cut off that has been cut off in the death of Christ. It is very blessed to see that we come at it from the side of being filled full in Christ; if I have a sense of that I

do not want a single thing connected with myself. If filled full in the glorious Man at God's right hand, what do I want with the things belonging to a man down here, the wisdom and abilities of a man in the flesh?

ALM We can sit at His feet and drink it in as Mary did.

CAC Yes, and we are welcome to it, it is for the whole church, and for the world if they would have it. The fulness of Christ is for everybody if they will have it. "Whom we announce, admonishing every man, and teaching every man ... that we may present every man perfect in Christ". That shows the scope of it; it is for every man.

Rem As to the order here, Gilgal is put first, but it was the other side of Jordan.

CAC Yes. We should have perhaps expected baptism to be put first, but Paul puts circumcision first and then burial with Christ in baptism. When we have learned that we can do without the flesh — that it is a hindrance and must be cut off, and that it has been cut off in the death of Christ, then we can enter into what it is to be buried with Him in baptism. It is that we go in mind out of the world as completely as if we were buried, in view of being raised with Him. I think we only get the full spiritual import of baptism in the light of circumcision. It is striking that not till the people were circumcised at Gilgal was the reproach of Egypt rolled off. It suggests they were not clear of Egypt till they were circumcised; and if so they had not entered into the import of being baptised to Moses in the Red Sea. When God brought His people *out*, what He had in mind was to bring them *in*. The Red Sea is what answers to baptism, and Jordan is connected with their going in.

In Romans baptism has to do with the new place which we take up in relation to this world; it is in view of being dead to sin and walking here in newness of life; we are to walk in a new kind of life morally in the old place. But in Colossians it is not that; it is in view of living with Christ in a new place as risen with Him.

It was when Israel got to Gilgal that the reproach of Egypt was rolled off. In circumcision they accepted the truth of baptism. The people had to follow the ark of the covenant over Jordan; it was a question of the attraction of the ark.

In Colossians it is a question of the attraction of Christ. We have received a Person who is so known and precious that we are prepared to follow Him in order to live with Him, and that is outside human life here altogether. Everything is to be taken up here in the light of Christ known in the heart. One gets a sense that everything I could boast in as man in the flesh has been cut off in the death of Christ. If we see that we are prepared to enter into what

baptism is. As a matter of fact very few of us had any knowledge of what our baptism meant till long after we were baptised. We were baptised at the start but we have to come to it in mind, to realise that in our baptism we were buried with Christ. We are not actually buried, but we have to come to it in mind. If I come to that, my mind is not to live in this world, but to live morally and spiritually with Christ. He lives as a risen Man, God operated and raised Him from the dead, and we are raised with Him "through faith of the working of God who raised him from among the dead". It is a question of faith.

COLOSSIANS 2

Colossians 2:11-23

Ques You spoke last week of 'over Jordan' referring to the forty days. Will you explain that?

CAC I was referring to the forty days when the Lord was seen by His disciples as risen, before His ascension; it was not heaven but an entirely new sphere of life.

All this part of the chapter hangs on being complete in Him; it can only be taken up spiritually as we have the sense of being complete in Him. If we are filled full in Christ we are independent of everything that is not Christ. But then the Christ in whom we are complete is a Christ who is not alive in this world at all. He was once alive here, but His life here was terminated by death, and He has been raised by the working of God; it is in that One that we are as saints filled full. Being in the sense of that prepares one to accept circumcision, and to be really in the true value of baptism, and to come in faith to being raised with Christ.

Rem In the sense of being complete in Christ we can touch the truth of baptism.

CAC I think so, in the Colossian sense. In Romans baptism does not quite suggest being raised with Christ; Christ's resurrection is in view, but not ours. "We shall be of his resurrection"; "we shall also live with him". It is all included, but viewed as in prospect rather than as present. But in Colossians baptism is regarded from the standpoint of being complete in Christ, and of being circumcised in Him. His death is seen as "the circumcision of the Christ". In Romans we are buried with Him in order that we may be found living a new kind of life here. Walking "in newness of life" is a new kind of life, not a new sphere. Instead of doing one's own will one does God's will — that is Romans. I hope we understand a little of that: we have all heard of the little servant maid who knew she was converted because she swept under the mats; now that is a new kind of life. But in Colossians what is in view is a new sphere of life, and it is the privilege of the saints to live in that new sphere for the pleasure of God. We have to reach that sphere spiritually, and to leave behind everything connected with what we are as alive in this world. If the saints are *filled full* in a Man who is no longer alive in the world they do not need to carry with them into God's presence one jot or tittle that is connected with them as alive in the world. They can dispense with it all as being without value. If I were the best man alive in the world, or if I had the purest

genealogy from the most distinguished or august ancestors, if I had royal blood in my veins, or could claim the pedigree of a Saul of Tarsus, of what value is it if I am filled full in a risen and glorified Christ? It is only, at best, a useless encumbrance; however good it might be, or desirable, if measured by human standards, it is absolutely without value to me. I am independent of it; I can do without it. To retain it would be only to retain a competitor or a rival to Christ. I am willing to be circumcised, though it involves suffering in the flesh, because it is in Him that I am circumcised, and in His circumcision. It is a positive relief and satisfaction to see it all go in the death of Christ, because until it is gone the reproach of Egypt is not rolled away. Until that moment is reached there is an element left in the soul of being "alive in the world".

When we speak of circumcision we are not referring to anything outward such as conduct before men, but to something which is true inwardly in the heart and spirit — something under the eye of God (see Romans 2: 28, 29). You come to it in your spirit; circumcision is of the heart and spirit. The only One — Christ — who had a title to live on earth has gone into death. There was a most wonderful circumcision in His death. The only Person who had a title to live is dead — that is the circumcision of Christ. The body of the flesh has been cut off in His death. When that is apprehended in our spirits we are glad to be severed from things we might have boasted in, and which would have given credit or place to us as alive in the world. Till we come to circumcision we have not done with Egypt. No one has done with Egypt till he is circumcised. The children of Israel had been forty years in the wilderness under divine education with all kinds of discipline, but they had not known circumcision; and they had not done with Egypt till they came to Gilgal. The reproach of Egypt hung about them until then, and it hangs about a good many of us! Even after reaching Gilgal we have continually to return there the camp was there; it is the place of power for victory and for taking possession.

Ques Why is the Head of all principality and power brought in here?

CAC It is to show the wonderful character and greatness of the Person in whom we are complete. He is not only Head of the assembly but of all principality and power. He is so great that every position of dignity in the universe of God will be filled out of Him. There is not a dignity or splendour in God's universe that will not draw its dignity and blessedness out of Christ: and we are filled full in Him! It is just the simple truth of christianity, and we have to come to it and learn what it means. C.H.M. once illustrated it by a boy being sent to school with a box in which everything was put that he could possibly want until he came home again. If he wanted a pencil it was in the box; it he wanted a book, it was there; or an article of clothing, or anything,

he had only to look in the box. It might take him all the term to learn what was in the box, but it was all there for him. Thus everything the saints can ever need or desire, in regard to spiritual needs and relation to God, is all there in Christ. We are complete, filled full in Christ. It will take all eternity to learn what is in Christ.

It has often been pointed out what serious error has got into the text in verse 11 by the word 'sins' being put in; it is not sins but the man, the body of the flesh, that is put off; "the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Christ". The exercise of Gilgal needs to be maintained in the soul; we never reach a point when we do not need to keep up the character of Gilgal. Here it is in view of a new sphere of life, being raised with Christ. Faith comes in in connection with that; we are raised with Christ by faith.

Ques How do you connect faith with the operation of God in raising Christ from the dead?

CAC I thought it was the soul's apprehension of the sphere and character of the working of God. The sphere where God is operating is the sphere of resurrection; the soul has to come to the apprehension of it. It is the mind of God for all the saints to be risen with Christ, just as much as it is His mind for them to be justified. In Romans faith is connected with justification — faith in God as having raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. But in Colossians faith is in the working of God; He is working in the sphere of resurrection, and that takes one entirely outside all connected with life in this world. He has raised Christ from the dead, and everyone who has the faith of that working is raised with Christ.

Ques Is it the soul accepting that Christ is raised?

CAC There is a little more than that in it: the fact of God having raised Christ would be assented to by all orthodox Christendom. I suppose all believers would accept the fact; but it is different to get the faith of the working of God, to see the character of divine working. Christ's life in this world terminated by His death. He has been buried, and He will never live in the world again. But there has been a wonderful working of God; He has raised Christ from among the dead. If we have the faith of that working we apprehend the will of God that we should be raised with Him. If we are filled full in Him we are prepared to disappear from the place from which He has disappeared, but then it is in view of appearing where He appears by the working of God. We apprehend that the working of God is outside the whole course of this world; it is known to us in the raising of Christ. Every one who has the faith of it is raised with Him. It is not merely assenting to it as a fact, but there is faith of the working

of God; the soul is really with God as to the sphere of His working. If you have the faith of that working it does not leave you as one "alive in the world", or even as dead and buried as to the world; it gives you the divine light of being raised with Him. This is the will of God for all saints.

As faith grows exceedingly it moves from Roman faith to Colossian faith — a distinct move. It is one thing to see that God has raised Jesus our Lord from the dead for our justification. A risen Man is my righteousness, and therefore I have peace with God; that is Roman faith. But Colossian faith goes further; it apprehends the character of divine working in view of God's pleasure. God's pleasure is found in a Man who is risen from the dead, and in the saints as risen with Him. That is the platform on which the pleasure of God places us; we have to come to it in faith, but it is there to come to. We do not touch Christianity in its proper character till we come to that.

By faith we are raised with Christ, but then in verse 13 quickening power is spoken of. We have saints not only raised, but quickened. Capacity depends on quickening. There is a mighty operation of God by divine power in the saints that enables them to live in their affections with Christ. To be risen with Christ is a question of faith, but quickening together with Him is what God has done. He has made the saints to live, and live together with Christ. There is a company of persons who have been made to live with Christ, so that their thought of life is all bound up with Christ. The working of God in raising Christ from the dead can be apprehended by faith; but quickening is a divine operation in saints, it is not a question of faith; we are quickened by the mighty power of God. Quickening is spoken of in Scripture in connection with a resurrection order of life. Where resurrection and quickening are spoken of together, resurrection is always first and then quickening. The reason for that is that resurrection is connected with what we are brought out of, but quickening is in relation to what we are introduced into. Resurrection brings me out of death, but quickening enables me to live in all that is new.

Ques Is quickening different in Ephesians?

CAC There is this difference. In Ephesians the whole thing is looked at in its completeness; it is the complete work of God there. In chapter 1 we have the purpose of God; and in chapter 2 the mighty working of God by which He carries out His purpose. Quickening there is in view of the full result of divine power — saints being made to live in spirit with Christ in heaven. They *will* be made to live there actually. The truth is looked at in its completeness without dwelling on detail.

Ques What about the quickening in Psalm 119?

CAC There it is a people so quickened that the law can be written in their hearts and they can fulfil responsibility; we need quickening for that. They feel the need for it as the law, commandments, statutes, ordinances, judgments and testimony come before them. They take up one thing and another, and pray to be quickened that they may answer truly to the law and the ordinances. Israel *will* answer to it all livingly when the dry bones come together, and the Spirit of the Lord puts life into them. They will be quickened; and when quickened they can take up all the commandments and answer to them perfectly, and fulfil their responsibility. They will be a quickened company on earth. Colossians is a quickened company to live on the platform of resurrection with Christ, and Ephesians is a quickened company for the full height of the heavenly position.

We get all three aspects of quickening in John 5. In the beginning of the chapter the man had been thirty-eight years lying by the pool and someone always got in before him — the Lord raises him up and he carries his bed. It is a figure of moral quickening — power to carry out the will of God in practical life here. This answers to Romans. Then the Father raises and the Son quickens: that is rather spiritual quickening to live in a new sphere spiritually. Then finally there is actual quickening: "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth". In each case it is out of death — three aspects of quickening.

Ques What about the Lord breathing into His disciples?

CAC The Lord had in view a people who could be sent into the world in testimony; and it is in view of that He breathes into them — "As the Father sent me forth, I also send you" — "Receive the Holy Spirit". They are made to live in relation to testimony.

As quickened we live in relation to Christ. We may have to do many things in this world, earn our living perhaps, and we have human and family relationships, but these are not the things which the saints live in: the spiritual life and affections of the saints are all bound up with Christ, and we enjoy it when we come together. We have nothing to speak of then but Christ, one Person before every heart; and those who are quickened can enjoy that. He has made us live together with Christ. If God has quickened us, it involves the leaving behind of all questions; our trespasses are forgiven, the handwriting of ordinances is blotted out, principalities and powers spoiled; there is a complete divine settlement of every question that could be raised in relation to what we were as alive in the world.

Ques Is that where the Supper comes in?

CAC We come together because we are under the power of the name of the One who is no longer here. I know no reason for coming together to break bread, but because we have received the Christ, and He is not here, we have come under the power of His name, and He has proposed to us to do a certain thing while He is absent. When we come together it is a scene of divine suggestion: everything helps to suggest Christ, the bread and cup and everything else. That is why we are so happy when we come together for the breaking of bread, because there is not a single suggestion brought before us of any person but Christ. I speak of course of the divine side. There is no self-judgment there; all that is settled before we come; everyone comes as self-judged. There is not a suggestion of any kind save of Christ. A people quickened are thoroughly at home where everything speaks of Christ. We gladly embrace the privilege of just looking at ourselves as subjects of the love of Christ. We need to be quickened in affections to enjoy such a circle.

These chapters are not to be hurried over; they contain the essence of christianity in its spiritual power.

COLOSSIANS 2

Colossians 2:16-23

CAC It is important to see that God has dealt with all the things which might have hindered His saints from being in spiritual liberty as quickened together with Christ. Faith occupies itself with the actings of God. I am referring to the close of the paragraph preceding that just read; offences forgiven, handwriting in ordinances effaced, principalities spoiled. God has dealt with these things; they do not remain to be dealt with. Faith recognises what God has done. These are great divine facts as to the saints: all offences are forgiven, every obligation of the law met, and all evil powers have been dealt with. Otherwise the saints would not be able to enjoy their place of association with Christ as quickened with Him.

Ques Is being dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world previous to being raised with Christ?

CAC I think "If ye have died with Christ from the elements of the world" refers to a position which the saints have taken up: it answers to the stones being put in Jordan.

Ques Would the principalities and authorities be the powers of darkness?

CAC Yes, I think it refers to evil powers that have had to say to man. No evil power has any claim or standing now; on the contrary those powers have been fully exposed, and God's complete triumph has been made manifest.

Ques Does it embrace the whole power of Satan?

CAC Yes, all the powers of the invisible world which have become active in hostility to God and to His pleasure. The reason why the Spirit of God dwelt on this was that the Colossians were evidently in danger of being occupied with the powers of the invisible world; worshipping of angels and intruding into things which they had not seen; some men were occupied with imaginations as to the invisible world. To meet that the apostle shows that, as to principalities and authorities in their right place, Christ is "head of all principality and authority", and as to evil powers all have been fully exposed in the cross, and God's triumph secured. Therefore nothing can be gained by being occupied with the powers of the invisible world; it is only a diversion from Christ.

The cross was the place where every evil power came into manifestation through man. The wicked principalities and powers did not appear on the scene, but they were moving behind the scenes and using man as their

instrument, and they made manifest their hostility to God. There was something more in connection with the cross, something far greater at work than the wickedness of man. It was an unheard-of thing that an innocent Man should be condemned by universal voice — a Man who had been doing good to man in every step of His pathway, and whose life was beautiful to God — such a Man to be rejected, cast away and crucified by the very creature He came to bless! There was something more there than the wickedness of man. Man was the dupe and tool and expression of it, but tremendous powers were working there — all the evil powers of the invisible world — and they were exposed, their true character came to light. They were opposed to everything that was good and blessed for man; their character was manifested morally so as to deliver men from them. In Psalm 2 we see that the kings of the earth and the princes set themselves against Jehovah's anointed to cast off the authority of God. But man is not really an independent actor; he is the agent and tool of tremendous powers of evil which were exposed and shown in their true character at the cross, as opposed to all that is good and righteous and holy. God in a marvellous way has got the victory over them, and Christ is Head of all good principalities and powers. The Spirit of God is to show that Christ is supreme over all the powers of good and evil, so it is worthless for man to worship angels, and to be occupied with the mysterious powers in the invisible world. Christ has had to say to all these powers: He had to say to the evil powers at the cross and triumphed over them, and as to the good powers He is Head of them all. So if we have Christ before us, we have the supreme One; we do not need to be occupied with what is adverse or what is subordinate.

Ques What is the handwriting of ordinances?

CAC The handwriting of ordinances was a serious matter against man. It condemned him and brought him in as subject to the judgment of God, but it has been nailed to the cross, the extreme penalty has been suffered, the condemnation borne by Christ. So the handwriting no longer stands against the saints; it has been removed out of the way. He has been made a curse for us, and thus the condemnation which attached to those under the law has been nailed to the cross. Christ has come in grace under the penalty of a broken law; its full condemnation has been borne; it is removed out of the way. God has dealt with everything: He has forgiven offences, taken away the handwriting of ordinances, and spoiled principalities and powers, so that nothing might hinder the saints from being raised with Christ by faith, and quickened with Christ by the power of God. God has Himself cleared the ground, and it is our privilege to be occupied with the actings of God.

Ques Are there not powers that are ordained of God?

CAC Yes, that refers to a different sort of power. There are powers which are ordained of God in connection with the government of this world. We must be subject to them, acknowledging them as ordained of God. We are very dependent on these powers, and own God's goodness in them — that is why we pray for them every day!

This epistle is not so much occupied with what is done for us as with what is done for the pleasure of God. The point is that all these things have been dealt with so that the saints might be free to live in their affections in association with Christ according to the pleasure of God. The ground has been cleared that Christ may fill it.

Ques What does verse 17 mean, "the body is of Christ"?

CAC I think there is intentionally a twofold meaning or bearing. There is the thought that these things are a shadow, and the substance is Christ; and there is also the thought in it, which is alluded to more than once in this epistle, that the body is of Christ. There is such a thing now in existence as the body — that living organism in which the pleasure of God is found — and it is *of Christ*. Both these thoughts are wrapped up in that sentence. The spiritual import of the Jewish things mentioned is to be considered — meat, drink, feasts, new moon, sabbaths — all prefigured Christ, He was the substance of all. These things will all have their place in a coming day in relation to Christ; they will be taken up in the millennium,

but they will be discerned by faith as standing in relation to Christ. We discern them now as shadows of Christ: but if people tell us we must observe this day, or that, we refuse, because we have to do with the substance — Christ. Those were shadows, but divine value lies in the substance, and that is Christ.

Rem The apostle has headship in view.

CAC Yes. He wants to bring the saints to see the greatness of the Head as the source of supply, so that having the Head they might be independent of everything, whether Jewish elements, the philosophy of the heathen world, or imaginations as to unseen things. It is very establishing to see that everything, other than Christ, which is in the thoughts of man is valueless, however estimable it may be in man's account, because the body is of Christ. There is nothing in the body that does not come from Christ.

A man may be puffed up while grovelling on his face in the dust. One has heard of people doing penance by licking a big cross in the dust of the floor. It seems a very humble thing to do, but all the time a man is doing it he is vainly

puffed up by the mind of his flesh; such a thing satisfies the flesh, but there is no true gain in it. "Not in a certain honour" — all it does is to satisfy the flesh. It is striking that humility of a fleshly character is spoken of here, in verses 18 and 23.

There have been two great church revivals going on during the last hundred years. Puseyism began just about the same time as the Spirit of God revived the truth of the headship of Christ; Puseyism was a reviving of the synagogue of Satan which comes into view alongside Philadelphia. Philadelphia represents spiritual movement, and alongside that movement in connection with Christ as Head, there has been an imitation church revival which has resulted in what is known as the High Church movement — a revival of sacraments, ordinances, and ceremonies, external things without spiritual vitality. An imitation has some resemblance to what is true; otherwise it would not succeed at all in deceiving people.

The Spirit of God has been calling attention to "the body", the living organism which actually exists by God's grace and power, and to the fact that Christ is the life of it, and everything in it is of Christ; there is no dead material in "the body". But alongside of the body there is an imitation where people are occupied with what is traditional and ceremonial; it is of man in the flesh and suited to man as in the flesh; it is really the synagogue of Satan. It is solemn to think that a man may deny himself very strictly; he may refuse to eat or drink, and cut himself off from many things which others go in for: he may take what seems to be a humble place, but it may all be his own will, and a puffing up of the mind of the flesh. Sad to say, people often think more highly of all such things than they do of what is spiritual, because they make something of the flesh, but God and His Spirit make everything of Christ. It is strange how these things get mixed up sometimes with real faith, and even true christians get drawn into them.

Ques Would you give us a word on holding the Head?

CAC To hold fast the Head would be corrective of every form of departure, and a source of gain and building up. It means a tenacious holding of Christ as the only source of supply and direction for His body. It is a personal holding fast; it is not simply that we accept the doctrine of it. I am sure we all hold as doctrine that Christ is Head, but it is another thing for us to personally hold fast the Head and give Him His place in our affections, so that we do not look to any other source of supply. It is a vital thing. Mr. Stoney used to say that holding the Head was as if we all had our own heads cut off, and instead of them we all had only one Head, one source of supply and direction. How marvellously we should move together! If those here tonight had their heads

cut off, and we all had Christ for our Head, we should move in perfect unity; Christ would become the source of feeling, impulse, direction and supply for everyone. We should move together without hitches or jars. The secret of all troubles, difficulties and want of agreement is that we are not holding the Head, but are using our own heads and human judgment. The saying of the world is 'So many men, so many minds', but in the church it should be, 'So many men but one mind'.

Holding the Head means the refusal of every thought or feeling that has its origin in our own minds. If I have a feeling, an impression, or source of movement from my own mind it must be wrong. The only movements that are right are those which originate with Christ. It means personal self-judgment and refusal of one's own mind; and that is often a struggle. I hope we have all known what it is to get into the Lord's presence, and say, 'If this thought came out of *my* mind, then help me to judge it, and give me instead what is in Thy mind'. When you have connected your own importance with a certain course of action, the giving it up costs you something; it is a real test, and nothing but the living influence of Christ can help you to do it, to give up what you would naturally be bound up with and to move instead with the mind of Christ. The apostle says, "We have the mind of Christ". I do not know that I could quite say that, but the apostles could, because they were men who were holding fast the Head; they refused their own thoughts and impressions and got all from Christ.

If we held fast the Head wonderful grace would come in to nourish the body: we should all take our places as joints and bands. In this epistle the only things mentioned as acting in the body are things quite out of sight; not prominent members, but hidden "joints and bands". When we are prepared to be joints and bands things will work very smoothly! There will be nothing then but the grace of Christ manifesting itself through us for the good of others; there will be a drawing together, and nourishment ministered. We shall never be knit together in the flesh; we are only really knit together as we come under the influence of the Head. If we were all set on following Christ we should not all have the same intelligence or discernment, but all would move the same way; we should keep rank and in that way we should move together. Every brother or sister — for a sister can be a joint and band — would become a medium of supply, and would help to draw the saints together in the appreciation of Christ. It is a real exercise to be in the activities of the body, and to hold the Head.

The body increases with the increase of God; this would suggest that everything is in beautiful divine proportion. It is what we find in the city; it lies

four-square, all in perfect proportion. A great many of our exercises arise from things being out of proportion. The body is looked at as increasing, not as having reached finality. It is growing, something more of what is divine being continually found in it. It is well to keep in mind that everything which comes from the Head is for the whole body: that would save us from sectarianism. The church will come out in the value of everything that has been gained; and though only gained in a practical way now by few, yet it is given for the whole body, and the church will come out in the day of display in the value of it. If I get spiritual increase, a fuller and more just appreciation of Christ,

something has been gained that pertains to the whole body, and the church will come out in the value of it in the day of display.

Ques Is the body in Ephesians 4 rather different?

CAC What you get here is the internal activity of the body. In Ephesians 4 we have gifts which act on the part of Christ towards the body, but joints and bands are inward parts of the body, they are internal. A joint of supply is not a gift. Ephesians 4: 16 is all the members co-ordinated and co-operating so that every one becomes a joint of supply. The youngest of us ought to covet to be a joint of supply. Someone may say, I cannot contribute anything. That is not the point. Have you the sense that Christ can contribute? To have a profound sense of what Christ can contribute will make us joints of supply. Christ is looking for those He can use; He loves the assembly, and is seeking to manifest Himself to it. He is ready to use the feeblest and youngest of us if we place ourselves at His disposal; we have only to get a sense of what Christ can do. "To each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ". What a wonderful thing! Who can measure the giving of the Christ? It is the same word as the giving of God in John 4. If we only knew what a beneficent source God is and Christ is! He is the beneficent source of all grace, and every one of us can have it.

The object of gifts is to make us independent of them, so that, if we really got the spiritual gain of them, we should not need them any longer. Gifts are exercised till we "all arrive ... at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ". When we reach that point we shall not need gifts any longer. We are independent of gifts in the morning meeting: what has place there is the activity of the divine nature under the direction of the Head. Of course, if a gift is present it is quite possible the Lord may use it, but it is more a question of the divine nature in activity in each one, and the Head giving impulse so that things move on the line of family affections.

COLOSSIANS 2 AND 3

Colossians 2:20-23; Colossians 3:1-11

CAC The fact that Paul speaks of the Colossians as having died with Christ seems to suggest that they had taken up that ground — "If ye have died with Christ", chapter 2: 20.

It is a ground that christians have to take up; it is not a mere statement of doctrine. It would answer to what Joshua did when he put twelve stones in the bed of Jordan where the ark had been: it is rather striking that there was no command from God as to these twelve stones being put in Jordan, but Joshua did it. There was a command about twelve stones being taken out of Jordan and being set up at Gilgal, but none as to stones being put in Jordan. This seems to suggest that it is something that has a typical reference to what the saints do under spiritual leading. It is as the result of spiritual leading that the saints take the ground of having died with Christ. Then the stones are there to this day; they were put in the bed of Jordan and never taken out. That suggests that if christians have been spiritually led to take the ground of having died with Christ, it is never to be gone back from. All christian life depends on this: it is not exactly a matter of faith but of spiritual leading.

Ques Who is the spiritual leader?

CAC Joshua is a figure of Christ as the spiritual leader of His saints; we have to come under the leading of Christ. If as believers we surrender ourselves to the influence and leading of Christ, we shall be brought to see that Christ has died, and to take up the ground of having died with Christ. It is not a matter of doctrine, but what the saints are brought to by spiritual leading. It is something we do not come to at the outset of our career; we do not come to baptism in the Colossian sense at the outset. The question is, Have many of us come to it at all? We should not be free to seek the things above, or to set our minds on those things, if we have not taken the place of having died with Christ from the elements of the world. If I have been spiritually led by Christ, what do I want with the elements of the world? Being under ordinances, taking the pledge, etc., will not do me any good if I have died with Christ. Of course we have not actually died; it is what we come to in mind. "If ye have died with Christ from the elements of the world, why as if alive in the world do ye subject yourselves to ordinances? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch". Such things have nothing to do with the christian because they all apply to man as alive in the world, and make something of him as a man to be corrected, restrained, improved, even through harsh treatment of the body. Actually we are living as men and women in the world, but how do we take

account of ourselves spiritually? As under spiritual leading we have died with Christ from the elements of the world. If a man has died no one would think of correcting or improving him; that is all done with if he is dead. If you could draw up the most excellent and most perfect set of ordinances which set forth exactly what a man ought to be, what is the value of it in its application to a dead man? If one is dead with Christ, the improvement of man in the flesh and the world are absolutely valueless; a thousand things which believers are occupied with are set aside at one stroke.

The stones taken out of Jordan represent the whole of the people as having come out of death with Christ — we are risen with Christ "through faith of the working of God who raised him from among the dead". But then we have to be spiritually led to take up the ground of being dead with Christ; we have to come to it spiritually each one for himself. No amount of teaching could bring people to take that ground. Do we know Christ as answering to Joshua, the spiritual Leader? It is not lordship. Moses was the type of Christ as Lord, but Joshua was the type of Christ as Leader.

The stones were put where the ark of the covenant had stood in the midst of Jordan. It is marvellous for us to consider that Christ has been in the place of death. That wonderful Person, who has been magnified before our eyes in chapter 1 of this epistle, has been in death for us. It moves our affections profoundly to consider that glorious Man, that divine Person, as having been in the place of death.

Ques Do the stones left in Jordan mean that we should carry always the stamp of death?

CAC Saints are brought under spiritual leading to take that place in their minds and affections; they have died with Christ so the elements of the world have nothing more to do with them. It might be said to me that I ought to take the pledge. That is all right for a man living in this world, but that is where I, as a christian, am *not*. There are many things very nice for the improvement and correction of a man alive in the world, but a christian does not so regard himself; he accounts himself as having died with Christ, so ordinances do not apply to him. There could be no thought of trying to improve or correct oneself by harsh treatment of the body; that could not apply to those dead with Christ.

It is as Christ is established in our affections that we take up the position of being dead with Him. We do not want morally the place where He has died; if we love Him and know His love we do not want to live where He has died. It is christian privilege to take up in mind and spirit the position of having died with Christ: it is a question of the true nature of christianity, and it is wholly

unknown in the religious world. The position is a puzzle to the natural mind, and inexplicable to reason. Christ has actually died and risen, and as led by Him we can take the ground of having died with Him from the elements of the world, so that in heart and mind we are outside the range of ordinances.

Rem It is the true sphere of life for the christian.

CAC The simple fact is that Christ is our life. It is said plainly in verse 4 of chapter 3: "When the Christ is manifested who is our life".

B Is it the same as living on account of Him in John 6?

CAC It is in appropriating Christ as the living One, and as He becomes spiritually life to us, that we know anything of this. The truth of Christ's headship underlies the whole of John's gospel; He is the source of everything. "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is sitting at the right hand of God have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth". We need to ponder the gospel of John to get an idea of the things above, the gospel leads us to the thought of life — "that believing ye might have life in his name", John 20: 31.

Ques What is the difference in the thought of death and resurrection in Romans and here?

CAC One is in view of righteousness and the other in view of life.

Rem It says He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.

CAC That is in view of a new kind of life morally here in the place where we lived the old life; where we were bondmen of sin we have become bondmen to God and to righteousness. But that is not the life in the Colossian sense: there it is a risen and heavenly Christ who is the life of the believer, and it is hidden with Christ in God. You cannot show it to anybody. It is important that we should be set right in the place where we were all wrong, but it is in the mind of God to give us another kind of life connected with heaven. Romans answers to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and Colossians to the children of Israel over Jordan: it is another stage of spiritual life and progress.

Ques What is the meaning of Christ sitting at the right hand of God?

CAC Everything turns on the place where Christ is. If He had a place on earth, that would be the place for us, but if He is sitting at the right hand of God, that is the centre of interest for the saints. It is a question of where the life of the saints is. In chapter 3 the saints have come to regard themselves as dead and risen. If I have, my outlook is on things above.

L What is involved in, "Have your mind on the things that are above"?

CAC It is what is before you. We know what it is in the world. We sought certain things and had our mind on them, and they constituted our life. Every person in the world has something which is life to him and which he sets his mind on; it may be place, wealth, glory, or self-gratification in some form; but there is something he sets his mind on. In contrast to that the christian seeks the things above and sets his mind on them. We have come into line with what God has cherished in His heart and mind for us. The mind is controlled by the object. Practically it comes to this — just as the world is everything to the worldling so is Christ everything to the christian. The world is the life of a worldling; take the world away from him and you take his life. He would say, If you take away the world and all its things, I have nothing left. But a christian is perfectly independent of the world and all in it because Christ is his life.

Ques Does Mary at the grave illustrate that?

CAC Yes, it is just that. When Christ had gone, everything had gone out of this world for her. He was practically the life of her heart and affections. It is all foolishness to the natural man. We could not explain it; it is inexplicable to reason that a risen and glorified Man should be the life of a people in this world now. The most learned man could not grasp such a thing. There are people in this world who have, under spiritual leading, taken up the ground of being dead and risen with Christ, and Christ at the right hand of God is their life. No one could understand it except by spiritual leading, but that is christianity and nothing else is. It is an enigma to men of the world.

It is a matter of spiritual leading, not faith. The line of spiritual leading is the influence of Christ; it is not believing a testimony but the influence of a living Person. There is a great difference in Scripture between faith and sight. It says, "We see Jesus"; that is not faith, it is spiritual perception. "The world sees me no longer; but ye see me; because I live ye also shall live", John 14: 19. That is Colossians. Seeing Him is different from believing on Him. Thousands of people believe on Him but have never seen Him; that is, they have no spiritual perception of a heavenly Man at the right hand of God. It is a question of being spiritually-minded and spiritually led. If we accept the testimony of Scripture there is such a thing as seeing.

Ques Is it feeding on the old corn of the land?

CAC They fed on stored corn or old corn. That is, everything in the mind of God for His people is stored in a risen and glorified Man at God's right hand; that is the reason we cannot show anyone our life. We eat and drink and mind

our business and walk about like other people, but a risen and glorified Man in heaven is our life. You cannot see it, it is hidden with Christ in God.

Rem It makes one a different man.

CAC Yes, people cannot help seeing you are a different man. If a christian knows what it is to have Christ as his life, he is able to put on the beautiful qualities of Christ, and they come into evidence down here, but the life is hidden.

Ques Are we raised by faith?

CAC Yes, that comes first — faith in the operation of God, the divine working carried on in the sphere of resurrection.

In Romans we have faith in God, as the One who raised up the Lord Jesus, in view of our justification, but in Colossians it is in view of our living in association with Christ — quite a different thing. A brother once said, 'I am a justified man down here on the way to glory, selling buttons along the road'. But it is another thing to live in association with a risen Christ in the sphere of resurrection. Faith is presented in many different connections in Scripture; the crown of faith is Christ dwelling in the heart by faith; we reach the pinnacle of faith there. Faith comes in in many connections, but then we get something else — spiritual sight. Christ says to the church of Laodicea, "Anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see". That is not faith but spiritual perception. It is wonderful to see that the life in the mind and purpose of God for us is the life of a glorified Man in heaven; it is hid in God. If you want to know what your life is, it is hid in God: there is only one place where you can learn it — in the heart and mind of God. We have to leave behind everything connected with ourselves and the world in order to travel to the heart of God; and there we find His thought is that Christ is to be our life, and that our life is hid with Christ in God. What a change it would mean for us if we were moving through this world with the spiritual perception of Christ as our life, our only life in God's mind! That is the stones coming out of Jordan. There is another set of stones which are put in the bed of Jordan; that is the people represented as dead with Christ. The same people come out of Jordan with Christ to have Christ as their life. We are spiritually led to take the ground of having died with Christ, but it does not finish there; we are risen with Him.

Ques What is the difference between headship and leadership?

CAC They come closely together, because it is the personal influence of Christ. We all feel we need the personal influence of Christ more. Joshua suggests leadership in view of possession. People say, What are the things above? They are contrasted with what is on earth. They are really the features of the

heavenly Man. When the Lord was on earth He could say, 'I am of these things which are above, ye are of those things which are from beneath'. That is the contrast. One man belongs to things beneath, the man after the flesh; and we were once identified with him. Another Man is of the things above, the heavenly Man. These things are great realities. I am certain that those who set their minds on them, get them.

COLOSSIANS 3

Colossians 3:5-17

CAC In verse 5 we see what man is apart from the influence of heaven. The saints as having died and been raised with Christ are to seek the things above and have their minds set on them; they are under the influence of heaven. Apart from that, regarded as on earth, there are our members and they have to be put to death.

Ques Is this different from mortifying the deeds of the body in Romans 8?

CAC In Romans the deeds of the body are put to death by the Spirit; the Spirit is the power. But in Colossians the saints are viewed as having power in themselves. As having come under the influence of Christ they have been spiritually led to take up the position of being dead with Christ, and being raised with Him. They are formed in the divine nature, so are viewed as capable of putting to death their members which are upon the earth, and putting off the habits which do not belong to what is of God.

The apostle had spoken of Christ being our life, so it would be a very serious and solemn thing if the saints took the place of living on earth, living in these things.

Ques Would the putting to death be continuous, or is it what has been done?

CAC It supposes what has been done effectually, so that no quarter is to be given to these things. The thing is done in such an effectual way that it abides. The saint is to have his members on the earth in the place of death.

Ques What is the difference between circumcision and the circumcision of Christ?

CAC The circumcision of Christ is what has been effected in the death of Christ; the flesh was cut off there definitely and for ever. The saints have to come into the intelligence of that and the practical result of it. But circumcision is something carried out in one's spirit, it is not exactly what we do. Here it is something we do. We put to death certain members, and put off certain habits. Circumcision is that, in the light of what was effected in the death of Christ, we are prepared in spirit to let go every thought of flesh as anything which could be improved or corrected. We must come to it in our spirits.

Rem There are two categories here, and the first is more wicked.

CAC The first are things that belong to the nature of man as fallen and alienated from God on earth; they are indigenous to his nature. They are all

glossed over in the world, but they are just what man is. There is a difference between things to be put to death, and those to be put off. The last are habits: anger, malice, blasphemy, vile language. These are habits we may drop into, but they are to be put off.

Rem The first list is part of ourselves, but the other things are habits. For instance, a child brought up in a christian household would not have such habits, but the other things are part of him.

CAC Yes, such habits as "blasphemy and vile language".

Everybody is not in the habit of using vile language, but if there has been such a habit, it is to be put off. So with things like anger and malice, they are easily acquired; it is easy enough to give place to anger and wrath, and the more we give place to them the less ability we have to control them.

Rem These things come out of the mouth.

CAC Peter could say that nothing common or unclean had entered his mouth, but he could not say that nothing of that kind had come out of his mouth! Then the saints have to be told not to lie one to another; this is not a needless exhortation. Lying is serious, because it indicates that the old man has been retained. The object of lying is to present something more favourable to oneself than is really true; or else to present something more unfavourable to another than is true. There is no object or reason for doing such things, no tendency, if we have put off the old man and put on the new. Some people have the greatest difficulty in saying neither more nor less than what is true. They must add a little touch to make it more impressive or telling — they must colour the picture, even when there is no motive for doing so save the desire to make an impression on the hearer.

Ques What is the force of the word 'new'?

CAC I think it supposes freshness and energy of youth.

Ques What is being renewed?

CAC There is a continual renewal connected with the new man. It seems to suggest that it is in apprehension, a continual renewal in spiritual apprehension — "renewed into full knowledge according to the image of him that has created him" (verse 10). The new man is continually renewed in a new kind of moral apprehension according to the image.

Ques Then what is "renewed in the spirit of your mind", Ephesians 4: 23?

CAC That is Ephesians. That is a kind of top-stone to the subject of renewing. We get the renewing of the mind in Romans and the renewing of the spirit of

your mind in Ephesians: here it is renewed into full knowledge. There is a constant need for renewing; it is a present and continual thing by which features of an entirely new kind are brought in and developed in the saints. In Ephesians it is the moral character of God in righteousness and holiness. In Colossians it is God who has been imaged in a Man, so renewal there is a continual renewing in spiritual apprehension of what has been seen perfectly in that One in whom God is imaged. "Renewed into full knowledge according to the image of him that has created him" supposes Christ is before the soul as the blessed Man in whom God is imaged. One loves to think of the work of renewing going on continually in saints.

We are never told in Scripture to put off the old and to put on the new man: it is always assumed that the christian has done it, because, as F.E.R. said, all the epistles suppose the complete work of God in the soul. Saints are in Christ, and have the Spirit; and as being so they have put off the old man and put on the new. Everyone on that ground has put off the old man, he could not think for a moment of going on with the old man which is after Satan and not after God or Christ. How could anyone who knows what it is to be in Christ and have the Spirit think of going on with what is after the devil! He has put off that, and put on the new; it is the ground on which he stands as a saint. It is just like a man becoming naturalised as an Englishman. He was a German and has been naturalised as an Englishman. He has put off the German and put on the Englishman. He may have to acquire the tastes, habits and ways of an Englishman, but the moment he is naturalised he has put off the German and put on the Englishman. This is the position the christian has taken up; if he has not put off the old man and put on the new he is not a christian in the proper sense of the word. He is false to the position if he goes back to the old man: it is like a man who is naturalised using his position to favour his original country.

Rem If I am heavenly and appear earthly it is really lying.

CAC It is an exercise to come out in one's true colours. It takes a lot of renewing to bring us to a spot where we are outside all natural, religious and social distinctions. The idea is that we come to a spot where Christ is all things and in all. If Christ is all things — that is what it is literally — what does it matter if a man is a Greek or a Jew, if he is circumcised or uncircumcised, a nobleman or slave? It is a question of what is in the new man — nothing at all but Christ. So one leaves everything connected with man as alive on earth — "Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman" — if we come to another region and touch the region of the new man, Christ is all things and in all.

Christ is our life. Christ has become to the christian all that the world is to the worldling; if you take the world away from the worldling you have taken his life. Christ is the life of the believer; it is hidden, we cannot show it. A worldly man can show you his life — the race-course, picture-house, theatre, ball-room — but the christian's life is a Person actually in heaven at the right hand of God; He has become the life of the affections of the saints down here.

If Christ is all things, nothing is of any account but the features of Christ. No matter how noble a man may be, or how exalted or degraded in the social scale, it is of no account if Christ is all things: the features of Christ are all that counts. Arriving at this in the apprehension of our souls has tremendous practical results; it results in the putting on of all the heavenly features of that blessed Man.

Rem Male and female are spoken of in Galatians 3, but not here.

CAC Here the christian circle is in view, and we do not get beyond natural distinctions. We are still male and female there, but national, religious, and social distinctions disappear from view as being of no account whatever. One could fancy a king being converted and coming in among the saints; and one could imagine a crossing-sweeper being there. All the greatness of the king and the littleness of the crossing-sweeper would be gone, and they would be valued in the assembly according to what was of Christ in them.

The new man stands in relation to the place where the old man was. There is no new man in heaven, because there never has been an old one there.

Then all the beautiful features of Christ have to be put on, that the saints may appear, as carrying the beautiful features, as the elect of God. It is wonderful to come into God's view as the elect of God; it is not what we are before men but what we are before God. The saints come out under God's eye as the continuation of Christ, holy and beloved.

The result of the renewing in apprehension is a very practical one. It results in the saints appearing as the elect of God as having put on the character of Christ. "Bowels of compassion". God loves to see tender feelings in regard of suffering or need or infirmities of any kind, and even over the sad state of man, as when Jesus wept over Jerusalem. 'Kindness' is the disposition to benefit another because it gives one pleasure to do so, irrespective of any claim which the other may have. 'Lowliness' will give all honour to others, while 'meekness' declines to assert its own rights. 'Longsuffering' always wins, and it is what pleases God. 'Forbearing one another' indicates that it would be needed on both sides. I have only to consider my past for a moment to realise how I have been borne with. I have to mete out to others the same kind of

thing which I have so often experienced. Then "forgiving one another", it is really 'yourselves' here. You look at your brother as part of yourself; you cannot hold anything in your heart against him. I do not think it is here the administration of forgiveness, but what marks your spirit as under the eye of God — that you do not think of holding your complaint as a charge against your brother; you dismiss it from your spirit in the generosity of Christ's grace. "The Christ" is the blessed Man whom the gentiles so gratuitously sinned against, but He forgave us!

Then to all these we are to add love, which is the divine bond to hold saints together in the perfectness of those relations which pertain to the body. The presence of the Holy Spirit is known by what He forms. Love would really bring about perfectness — that is, relations between the saints which could not be improved upon.

The peace of Christ is the unruffled calm of one who only considers for God — in whom nothing has place but the will of God. It is to 'preside', as if all the varied activities in the heart were to be controlled by a supreme influence — the peace of Christ. What is contrary to the peace of Christ is not to have place in the counsels of the heart. We have been called to this; it is a specific object in the call of saints and it is a corporate thing. It has to do with the counsels of our hearts in reference to our corporate relations. We are often controlled by agitated feelings, but they are not the peace of Christ.

Then thankfulness is to abidingly fill the heart. If you do not find yourself 'thankful' it is a danger signal to which you should take heed. Murmurings, discontent, fretfulness, are like canker in the soul. They do not honour God or His goodness.

COLOSSIANS 3

Colossians 3:12-25

Ques What is teaching and admonishing one another in verse 16?

CAC It is the general character and spirit of what is found among saints. The word of the Christ is the wealth of the assembly, the body — that highly favoured company which is enriched in the knowledge of the Head. The word of the Christ is to dwell in each of us richly so that we may always be able to teach and admonish when we come in contact with one another. It is *one another* here; it is not gifts teaching and preaching, it is the saints teaching and admonishing one another because the word of the Christ, the blessed testimony of the Head, is cherished here. When we meet we speak of Christ, and we have plenty to say! We do not drop down to the chit-chat of the world; we speak of Christ. The word of the Christ would be very comprehensive; it is what is held in spiritual intelligence in regard of Christ. It is the idea of the Christ being so intelligently apprehended that He can be spoken of; we have something intelligent that we can communicate to another.

Ques Would it be in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs?

CAC That is different. "Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs" is singing in your hearts *to God*. Teaching and admonishing is to *one another*. But I think singing is the outcome of teaching and admonishing. We get so enriched in the knowledge of Christ that we have a good deal to sing about. The word of the Christ takes the form in our hearts of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; it breaks forth in joy to God. This fits in with the truth of the epistle, that the body is here for the pleasure of God — it is that vital organism in which God delights.

Ques Why does it say, "*Let* the word ... dwell in you"?

CAC I think that is happily put. It gives the idea of an immense reservoir of spiritual wealth which you have only to let flow in and have an abiding place in your mind. The word of the Christ would be the whole divine testimony in regard of Christ; it has come out now in its fulness in regard to the body, the assembly, and we are to let it dwell in us richly in the way of teaching; then we shall have something to say of Christ when with one another. What a company the church is — a people with no interest but Christ, and when they come together they only speak of Christ! The little bit of light which I enjoy of Christ is distinctive to my soul, so if I speak of it to another saint I may speak of something he has not thought of, so my wealth becomes his, and it results in God getting something.

In Ephesians 5: 19 we speak *to ourselves* in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, but here it is that we speak *to God*. It is in keeping with the truth of this epistle, the body here for the pleasure of God; it is all outflow Godward. It is not Christ as known here in testimony, but Christ as cherished in the body for the pleasure of God. What a delight to God to look down and see a company on earth which values Christ, and takes a divine estimate of Christ, and is able to praise God for Christ, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, which all relate to Christ.

Ques Would not that be a testimony?

CAC It is not the setting here. If we are ministering to the pleasure of God, there is no doubt about the testimony being all right.

Ques What hinders the wealth from flowing in?

CAC Sometimes the tap is turned off and the flow stops; but we have to deal with that. If we have put on the precious features of Christ in verses 12 - 15 there would be nothing to hinder the flow. "Let the word ... dwell in you richly", supposes there is nothing to hinder. If we have moved along the line of the previous part of the chapter and have got the apprehension which is connected with spiritual renewing, it results in putting on these beautiful features of Christ; and then there is no hindrance.

The end of everything is that there shall be a portion for God. Saints are the elect of God; that is the character attaching to them under the eye of God, as the continuation of Christ. It is elect, not in the sense of sovereignty, but of complacency.

Ques Would psalms, hymns and spiritual songs represent stages or states?

CAC I think a psalm is connected with the recital of God's ways with us, with the wonderful way He has brought us into the knowledge of Christ. We sometimes sit down and turn over in our minds the wonderful way in which God has led us on in the knowledge of Christ; how He brought us from the outset and held us under influences that would promote our knowledge of Him. We think over ten, twenty or thirty years that bring before us a wonderful course of divine dealing, His ways in giving us an illumination of Christ. You sing your psalm which represents all God has done. You think how He brought you in contact with a brother who gave you an impression of Christ, or a spiritual ministry that helped you, or some book, or the company of your brethren used in some way. There are so many ways, and they all make up a psalm to show how God has dealt with you and given you a knowledge of Christ. Then a hymn is more direct praise to divine Persons: 'We praise Thee,

glorious Lord, Who died to set us free'. That is a hymn, it is direct to the Lord in praise. A spiritual song is something that cheers you on your pilgrim way.

Ques Has a psalm to do with the wilderness?

CAC A psalm has to do with the ways of God, not the wilderness ways, but instruction in Christ. Discipline contributes largely to the knowledge of Christ with every one of us. God has to discipline us to break down what would hinder, and to expose the folly in us. It is all part of His ways to make Christ more precious, and that all comes into our psalm. Everything turns in joy to God; the heart has its overflow of joy, and the overflow goes up to God in song.

Then everything is to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. That gives a wonderful character to everything in our practical life. Everything is to be done as representing the Lord Jesus in the place where He is not. It gives character to every relationship. There are different relations in which we stand here, but they all become opportunities for doing things in the name of the Lord Jesus. It takes a long time with most of us to get away from the idea that a good many things we have to do are to be done on our own account.

Ques What do you mean by our own account?

CAC Perhaps the majority of christians have not much idea of doing things in the name of the Lord Jesus. They might think that if they prayed they would pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, or they would preach in His name, but I doubt whether many christians entertain the idea of doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus. We do them because He is not here; if He were here He would do them. It is connected with the truth of the epistle; we are here in the place where Christ is absent to do things on His behalf. A lot of things would drop out if that became our standard. One feels humbled when one reads a scripture like this, as to how much we say or do that is not said or done on behalf of the Lord Jesus, but on our own behalf, very often to please ourselves. That is not christianity at all.

Ques How does 'whatever' fit in with daily duties?

CAC It fits in very well if we will let it. 'Whatever' means duties such as slaves, or husbands, or wives, or children have to do. All is summed up in this fact, that each one has to be here acting on behalf of Christ; it all comes to that. With a slave it comes out beautifully; Paul has more to say to the slave than to anyone. He gets down to the most menial life possible to man, and he enlarges on the moral value of it. I wonder whether we know who we are working for? A slave might have very little in the way of money; sometimes he would only have his food and clothes, but Paul puts him in view of the

recompense of the inheritance. If a slave does his work on behalf of Christ, he does it as Christ would do it, and he gets his recompense in the inheritance. What a man gets at the end of the week is not his wages. A man takes his two pounds home; that is just a bit on account to find food and clothing; that is not all he is going to have. He is going to be paid in the kingdom. It is not the inheritance in divine purpose, but the inheritance as recompense for what a slave has done in scrubbing floors and cleaning his master's boots. The little bit at the week-end is only on account for present use; he will get it all in a lump then — the recompense is the inheritance.

Ques Does the Hebrew servant apply to this?

CAC Yes, the Lord has been in the place of a servant. It is wonderful to think of Him as "the carpenter" — He is spoken of as "the carpenter".

Rem Paul was a wonderful servant, too.

CAC Paul was called to a life of spiritual service. One could understand the inheritance being given for the labours of an apostle, but it is so marvellous that it is the recompense for the daily toil and drudgery of a slave. If a slave has taken up his work in the name of the Lord, it puts a glory on it. One can hardly think of a greater thought morally than doing it to the Lord. We get other persons before us and then it becomes eye-service.

Rem If we took this up there would not be shifting about and seeking to improve circumstances.

CAC It does not matter what the circumstances may be, what does matter is the motive that is ruling. Do we desire to be here doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus and continually giving thanks? The first danger-signal that flashes out on the path of a saint is when he finds himself ceasing to give thanks. Thanksgiving is just the opposite to being discontented and wanting a change.

Ques You would not imply there is to be no change?

CAC I think the path of a saint is divinely ordered; things are opened up and we go on with them. It may be in God's way to improve our circumstances in this life, and if it is God's way it is happy. God gives money to some to give to him that has need. If all saints were on the verge of poverty we could not help one another. The point is, What is the motive that is ruling us? That is where God's will comes in. I do not think God has any particular will as to where I live, but I think He has a will as to the motives that rule me. If we are on the line of doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus with thanksgiving, God

can promote us, He can put us up or put us down, He can put us here or there, or do what He likes with us.

All relationships — husbands, wives, children, slaves — are to be taken up in the light of this, and then everything drops into its place. Wives are subject, husbands are affectionate, children obedient, slaves obedient and diligent. They know whom they are working for and are quite sure of their pay, for they know the pay is magnificent! There is no chance of God's bondmen grumbling at their pay! Heaven and earth have been ransacked to furnish the inheritance, and all is to be given in recompense for two or three little things you do in five minutes here! There is no need to fret about other people doing wrong! If a man does wrong he will receive for the wrong he has done, there is no need to fret yourself.

Ques A Christian does not look for reward, does he?

CAC Love proposes to give one. The principle of reward seems necessary to man as a creature; it would not have place if not. Reward is constantly spoken of in Scripture; it is not an unworthy motive. The fact that there is so much about it in Scripture shows that it pleases God to have things He can reward. It pleases Him to give the reward, and it pleases the saints to have the recompense. If we get suffering, and we get some word by the Spirit, that is recompense and it is a great cheer; none of us are independent of it. It is from the divine side that recompense comes. The first direct reference to it in Scripture is to Abram, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward". Moses had respect to the recompense of the reward. God likes us to look for it. *We* often look for it from man and in this life, but we should look for it in the inheritance. Paul tells us his great labour was to be agreeable to the Lord; he had his eye on the future day and the recompense. If I do things in the name of the Lord Jesus, it must inevitably follow that I am a loser in this world. If you take a course that exposes you to loss, what a recompense you will get in the inheritance! Everything will be magnificently adjusted then.

Ques Will things be recompensed here, too?

CAC Yes, I think all these things that come in on the line of the kingdom have a present application. What is pleasing to God has its recompense here, and what is wrong gets its recompense even here.

Ques What does the Lord, typically, refer to when He speaks of "a goodly heritage", Psalm 16: 6?

CAC I think He refers to the portion He enjoyed as Man moving through this world in His Father's love. He said, "I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love". He had His inheritance here, He could say, "The lines

are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" and "Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance, ... thou maintainest my lot". He had His portion in God. As to His outward pathway He had nowhere to lay His head, but He had great recompense; He could speak of "my joy". The character of joy seen in that blessed One was never seen before in man.

Ques Is every saint bound up with the name of the Lord?

CAC It is all privilege; so thankfulness comes in in connection with it. Each one esteems it a great privilege to be here in such a position. There is no room for anyone to say, 'If I were in someone else's shoes I should do better'. Everyone has a chance of doing things in the name of the Lord Jesus, and an apostle could not do more.

COLOSSIANS 3 AND 4

Colossians 3:18-25; Colossians 4:1-18

Rem We should all like some expansion of thought in relation to "the word of the Christ".

CAC It seems to be a very comprehensive word as colouring all that is to dwell in the saints richly.

Ques Would it cover all that is expressed in Christ risen and glorified, and be an expression much in keeping with the epistle, in which Christ is so prominent?

CAC Yes, I thought so. I suppose the teaching and admonishing would naturally flow out of the word of the Christ dwelling richly, that is, we have something very precious to speak of to one another.

Rem I suppose it would cover ministry, doctrine and everything we have recorded in relation to Christ, everything that is to be known of Him, our furnishing in relation to Christ.

CAC Whatever we may have to say in teaching and admonishing falls on willing hearts among the saints; it is not a matter of indifference. As remarked before, we do not find gifts specially mentioned in this epistle as we do in Ephesians, but we do have brothers mentioned by name in the last chapter who have exercised ministry. I suppose whatever is ministered in the christian circle would be covered by the expression, "the word of the Christ".

Rem The idea of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs is really the response. The more we understand the word of the Christ the richer the response will be.

CAC I think it should read, "Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another"; a semicolon there, and then, "in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God". It is always necessary that there should be teaching and admonishing. Those amongst us with the greatest knowledge of Christ would acknowledge they would like to know much more of Him, and that is through the ministry of Christ. When together in assembly we should look for a rich ministry. 'Admonishing' would be bringing things home to saints, not pure teaching, but with a consideration of their needs and actual condition.

Rem It would be done in love to bring them up to the standard, to bring them into line, rather than in censure.

CAC And we all feel how much we need admonition. There is always need of that because there are many obstructing elements, for what is of the flesh and the human mind is always rising up against what is of Christ. It is all that we may be perfectly free with God here, so that there is nothing whatever in our hearts Godward but what we get here.

If we speak to God in a psalm there must be purity; there can be nothing dark or hidden in service Godward. That is most important. We must always remember that, however great our privileges and relationships, we are still creatures, and it is most necessary that we should approach God the Father by Christ, and that keeps Him always before us. It would not be acceptable to God if we thought we could approach Him apart from Christ.

Rem "*Through him* we have both access by one Spirit unto the Father", Ephesians 2: 18. The higher the privilege the greater the need for Him. "No one comes to the Father unless by me", John 14: 6.

CAC Think of the blessedness of it! There *is* direct access, but it is in company with the Firstborn.

Rem "*By him* therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God", Hebrews 13: 15.

CAC God comes to us by Christ and we go to God by Christ. It must be so, and that gives an infinite character to it. Can anyone tell us why the family and household relationships are brought in in Colossians and Ephesians, but not in Romans?

Ques Why are wives addressed first here and also in Ephesians?

CAC The subject relationship is taken up first. There is not the same elevation here as in Ephesians. Husbands are not to be bitter against their wives. J.B.S. said he had met Colossian husbands, but did not think any Ephesian. "Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it".

Rem The christian household is the ideal place for the setting forth of these divine thoughts.

CAC A brother who had been speaking pretty fully of Christianity was asked by a worldly man, 'Where can we see these things?' His answer was, 'Among the households of the saints', and the reply was, 'I should like to come and see you in your house'. There is something really very peculiar in the christian household. It is a divine circle recognised of God. It is the divine thought that the truth of Christianity should be worked out in households. A man trying to sell an apparatus to a brother the other day said, 'It will bring all the world into your house'. 'That is just what I want to keep out', the brother replied. Is

there not a power of testimony in a house that you do not exactly get in the assembly? It is Christianity in a practical way. The christian household is intensely practical. It is where the truth is seen in a practical way as controlling natural relationships.

Ques What is the bearing of "Lord Christ"?

CAC I suppose he is dignifying the life of a slave. There is nothing elevated about that; he is outwardly in a degraded position, but inwardly he is serving the Lord Christ, so there is a dignity in it! He is kicked about all day but he is serving the Lord Christ and he is getting the reward of the inheritance. It is most comforting to those who may be outwardly in a very inferior position and not recompensed for what they do. They serve the Lord Christ and they are to get the reward of the inheritance for doing things of no importance whatever in men's eyes.

I suppose chapter 4: 2 is most important as giving us the secret of power for life in the new man.

Ques Why do you say, 'life in the new man'?

CAC Is not that the connection? This is the epistle that lets us know that there is a creation of God at the present time which is described as the new man. There is something brought in that is wholly of God in contrast to everything that was here before, and saints live as those who have put on the new man. Is not that the setting of the previous chapter? We have all had to learn that we have no power at all to move in the life of the new man, and that we can only do so as having to do with God in prayer.

Ques Would it be right to think of the Lord as the exemplification of that principle?

CAC Surely. His was a life of dependence from beginning to end. The different features that the saints are regarded as having put on are features that come out in perfection in Christ. That is why we love them, because they have been so beautifully illustrated in Him. So we like to take them on, not in any legal sense, but as lovers of Christ, owning His headship. We can learn from Scripture and from ministry the truth of the mystery, the new man and the body, but when the desire comes in our hearts to take these things up in a practical way there must be prayer and perseverance in it. No christian ever prospers apart from the cultivation of the spirit and habit of prayer.

Ques Why does thanksgiving come in in connection with the interceding?

CAC I think it indicates that prayer is soon answered. It is not a formal matter, it is not saying our prayers. I wish people could get rid of that for ever! It is a

real business of the soul, so that we do not gratify ourselves by the thought that we have spent an hour and a half in prayer; we watch for the gain of it. God loves to be known in an intimate way, and the more we cultivate intimate nearness to God the better He is pleased with us, and the more truly we enjoy what grace has given, for we cannot truly enjoy what is given at a distance from the Giver. Prayer is our delightful privilege. In a sense it is an obligation, because we cannot put on in a practical way any features of the new man except as strengthened by God. I wish we (I mean all believers) took on more this feature of persevering in prayer. Perseverance is to mark it.

Ques Would you say that it is in order that there should be continuance under God's eye of the features of the new man? It is not natural to the old man, so there is need of perseverance on that line?

CAC Yes. It is exemplified in Epaphras and Paul, and Epaphras is a wonderful example of a man full of the spirit of prayer.

Rem An expansion is seen here — "for us also, that God may open to us a door of the word".

CAC The more we are set for the development of these feelings of Christ, the more interested we shall be in the ministry. We find God is maintaining all that is connected with Christ as sitting at His right hand, ministering it in a ministerial way. That is very important. Paul was specially minister of it, counting on a door being open through the prayers of the saints. That is very encouraging when we feel that the door is largely closed in Christendom today.

Ques What is "the mystery of Christ"?

CAC I think it involves the whole truth of the glad tidings. It is the pleasure of God that all that is connected with Christ where He is should be spoken of and suitably presented. It is a very great matter with God that it should be spoken. If God has been pleased to entrust the speaking to anyone specially, as Paul, it is a very great obligation that we should pray for such.

Ques How would this affect the prayer-meeting?

CAC I think it would tend to expansion. We see the greatness of what may be called the cause of God.

Ques Was Daniel an example of one who prayed?

CAC Yes, and in a difficult day, as it is today. All the powers of darkness are against the setting forth of Christ in the saints and in ministry; they are the two great objects of attack.

Rem "The mystery of Christ" would bring the saints in.

CAC Yes, surely. Paul in prison is a kind of figure of the place that the mystery of Christ would have — it is under great restriction and always has been! We ought to be much in prayer that the door of the word might be kept open in spite of all these restrictions and difficulties. The more difficult the time, the more the need to bring God in.

I suppose the truth in the apostle's day went out mainly in a written form, and that is how it goes out mainly today — in what is written or printed. Therefore prophetic writings are of great importance; it is by them that the glad tidings and the mystery was known. I think it is important to pray about what is written.

Verses 5 and 6 bring all in. What wisdom is needed to give a right expression of God to everybody with whom we come in contact. All that we say is to be in concert with the dispensation, so our words are to be always with grace seasoned with salt. Salt represents a principle that preserves what is due to God. His grace is preached in the glad tidings, but those who present it do not fail to maintain what is due to God. So in our contact with men we have to present His grace — that is His attitude to all men — and at the same time there is a principle in the soul that would take account of what is due to God.

"How ye ought to answer each one". It is a very fine opportunity when people ask us questions. This scripture supposes people will ask questions and Peter exhorts us in his epistle, "Be always prepared to give an answer to every one that asks you", 1 Peter 3: 15. If we were really walking in the moral value of the new man, people *would* ask questions — they could not help it.

Then we get examples in those mentioned of men who were no doubt persevering in prayer and working things out practically. "Aristarchus my fellow-captive", and Mark and Justus, who are of the circumcision. We learn here how little the believers of the circumcision were any help in the work of God. The apostle singles three out and says, These only have been a consolation to me. It shows that the believers of the circumcision never rose to Paul's ministry. God's thought is to have a company of persons to whose hearts Christ is everything, and Christ in them as a matter of life, not a matter of doctrine. Christ is to be in them as life! These men are to be noted, for, depend upon it, the truth of the epistle was coming out in a practical way in them. I do not include Demas, for we know from another epistle that he forsook Paul. If we do not go on with persevering prayer, we shall wake up sooner or later to find our christianity is an empty shell.

When he refers to them as "the elect of God" (chapter 3: 12) he is not referring to the election of purpose, but of complacency. The saints are elect in the same sense that Christ is, "Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth!" He was perfectly delightful to God and He chose them out. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering; ... as the Christ has forgiven you, so also do ye". They have come into Christ's place. They are children because they have put on Christ's character. It is a beautiful thought to be God's elect in that sense. He is delighted in them because what is of Christ is coming out in them, and we are to see to it that we have such features that God can delight in us. The desire for that is implanted in every saint.

1 TIMOTHY 1 (FIRST READING)

1 Timothy 1

CAC It is very important that we should not overlook this epistle in connection with the highest truth. We connect the full unfolding of Christianity in its heavenly character with Ephesus. Does not this epistle give us what corresponds with that on the practical side? It is remarkable the place that Ephesus has in that way as being the crown of the apostle's ministry. It seems to have been a kind of headquarters for Satan in the world; the concentrated power of Satan was there. He had set up there the great goddess Diana "whom all Asia and the world worshippeth", Acts 19: 27. Ephesus was the devil's shrine in a special way, and God singled it out to be the place where His shrine should be. He set up in testimony all that was of Himself in the very place that had been the devil's stronghold.

Rem It is a great thing that the ground should be held in the face of the enemy.

CAC Yes, and the enemy completely overthrown. We were seeing lately how the power of the apostle's ministry was to pull down strongholds and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. We not only see that Ephesus was the temple-keeper of the goddess Diana, but we find the devil in full possession, men using curious arts, men glorified by the power of the devil; all this was in full bloom, and God says, as it were, 'I am going to plant there My testimony'. It had been the headquarters of the devil's power and now it is to be a great stronghold of God's testimony. We see in Acts 20 the way Paul laid the foundation, how he preached and how he laboured; then he went away and left Timothy there and wrote this letter to Timothy. It is instructive because it is instruction to Timothy in the absence of the apostle. Paul had left, and the testimony he had planted had to be preserved by men like Timothy. None of us can be Pauls but we can aspire to be Timothys, that is, true children in the faith of Paul. We may have a spiritual desire to come out in that character. It is interesting that Paul could leave behind him a man who was a true child of his. He does not mean that Timothy was his convert; he was not that, for Timothy was a disciple when Paul first met him, but he was so like Paul that Paul could say, he is my true child. That is the sort of man that is needed to read this epistle.

Ques What were the marks that made him a true child?

CAC All that was precious to Paul, and all that was the light of Paul's heart, was precious to Timothy, and was the light of his heart. Timothy was not the

size or the shape of vessel that Paul was. I am often thankful for Timothy; I should be very discouraged if we only had Paul! Paul was such an extraordinary man, one of the greatest men that the world ever produced as a man. I do not suppose that Timothy was a great man naturally. He was not of extraordinary energy and character as Paul was; he was probably a weak and timid man, and had a stomach that gave him trouble. Yet we see the testimony maintained in a feeble vessel without losing its true character. Paul's official place was that of an apostle, but I was thinking of the character of the vessel. The Lord could have made an apostle of Timothy if He had chosen, but He did not. Before He could make anything of Paul He had to reduce him, but that does not alter anything of the character of the vessel. God knows what He is going to do with a man from the beginning. It is striking that we find Paul and Timothy in perfect accord. Timothy was likeminded, a true child, there was a perfect answer in Timothy to Paul.

Rem Timothy had been a disciple.

CAC He had been under good influence from a child, he had a godly mother and grandmother, he was marked by piety, and had a good report of the brethren. It is a fine thing for a brother, particularly a young one, to have a good report of the brethren; it is the first thing we are told about Timothy. That he had known the Scriptures from a child suggests that the work of God was going on in him from a child, and that there was no point in his history at which one can say he was converted. Then the first thing is, he "had a good testimony". If the truth in this epistle is to have a real footing in this world, it must be in men like Timothy. We read Scripture too much as doctrine, instead of seeing that we get in Scripture the effect of the knowledge of God in men.

It is so instructive to see that difficulties at Ephesus had to be met by the moral power of a man of God, not by apostolic authority. That is how things have to be met now, by the moral power of men of God. Timothy was a man of God, that is what should characterise this dispensation; we need men of moral power now. There are so few men of God now; it is perhaps the most honourable title that could be conferred on a man. There are many children of God but few men of God.

Ques What does the title convey to your mind?

CAC It conveys to me that there is the stamp of God about the man; he is set here for God, and he will not flinch or swerve. The title seems to be connected with days of difficulty. Moses is the first to be called a man of God. The man of God is in full sympathy with the testimony, it has made its mark on him, he is cut out as a stone for the house of God. It is the truth here of the house of God, and he is wrought into proper shape for it.

Rem We think so much of how God will stand for us. Here is a type of man who will stand for God.

CAC Yes, that is a very important point. It reminds me of the story of a deputation that waited on Abraham Lincoln, and they began by saying, 'We trust that God is on our side'. He stopped them at once, and said: 'I am not concerned at that; what I am concerned at is that we should be on God's side'.

Rem Timothy had to enjoin these men not to teach wrong doctrine.

CAC Timothy was able to do it, his character and spirit were such that he could do what Paul enjoined on him. God never sets us to do anything we are not equal to.

All this brings in exercises as to our personal state, we cannot go on reading Scripture and taking no account of the kind of man that Scripture addresses. Timothy was a *true* child, and this is the character of man that can take up this scripture. We may be very small, but if this is not our character we cannot take it up. Paul was bringing out the character of things that was to mark the assembly of God and the shrine of His testimony. It is a very special time, and we should aspire to be found in the position of a Timothy, not his official position, but his relation to the apostle.

If a man is set for the testimony he is sure to encounter opposition. It reminds me of the case of a brother who was turned out of his work, and his foreman, in reporting to his master, said: 'This man thinks more of his God than of his daily bread'. He submitted to being turned out with no prospect of getting any more work, rather than surrender what was of God. That is a fine bit of testimony.

You get the teaching of this epistle summed up in the first verse, "God our Saviour, and ... Christ Jesus our hope". That is the blessed God known in grace and power, and God's blessed Son, Christ, the glorious Man of purpose, before the soul. If you put these two thoughts together you have the teaching of all that comes out in this epistle. If you want the key of any scripture you have only to read the first few verses; the key always hangs at the door of any scripture.

The epistle shows how we should behave in the house of God, not how we should behave in business or in the family circle; all is viewed in connection with behaviour in the house of God. That is why the first consideration is as to teaching. The most important thing in one way is that the teaching should be of God; if it is not, everything is corrupted at the source, the wells are poisoned. That is why teaching is so important, it is the first thing, you must have it first, and then you have the ornaments. If the teaching stood by itself

you would have no testimony, it is the teaching adorned that is the testimony. If you leave out teaching there is no testimony, and if you leave out adorning there is no testimony. The adorning is the teaching exhibited in the lives of the saints, that is the testimony. We should not like to use such a word as 'adorning', as if anything could add to the testimony, but the apostle does, he speaks of the teaching being adorned and that by slaves. We must have the teaching first, so Paul's great jealousy is as to the teaching. There were some at Ephesus he had misgivings about; they were saying what was not right, so he left Timothy there to maintain the teaching. Everything had to be met in moral power; there was not the assertiveness that could carry weight, but there was moral power, and everything had to be met with that. I remember once hearing of a meek, quiet brother who had to meet some unruly men, and I was told it was wonderful the power with which he met them. We want to see a little more of that. A man furnished with grace, mercy, and peace, is wonderfully calm in the presence of what is hostile. It was in the power of all this that Timothy could meet these things. It must have been very trying — people bringing fables into the assembly and endless genealogies, then others bringing in the law. That was the Jewish element coming in; it was the setting aside of the truth of our Saviour God, and of the hope of saints, the Man Christ Jesus. All was set aside if these things were admitted. The legal line has always been the devil's master-stroke, because it is the revelation of God in grace that is in question. God is for us; He is on our side. He has come out to be the Justifier and Deliverer of men, He is the Saviour God — a wonderful title.

Rem It is the gospel of the glory here.

CAC The glory comes out in His being a Saviour God. God makes it His *very* glory. It is terrible to take away glory from God. We must remember that all legal teaching robs God; it is not only that it robs man.

Rem Questions only tend to make us dry bones.

CAC If there is to be conflict, God does not call us to have conflict over a dry bone; if conflict arises there is a good deal of food at stake. We read about those mighty men of David who preserved the food to the people of God. One man preserved a "piece of ground full of lentils" (2 Samuel 23: 11), and another preserved a "parcel of ground full of barley", 1 Chronicles 11: 13. You would not contend for anything else but to preserve food to the people of God, and then how could a man die in a better cause!

Rem Gideon too threshed wheat to hide it from the Midianites.

CAC Yes, and it was by the wine-press, too! If a man preserves food for God's people, the wine-press is not far off; there is a good deal of spiritual joy.

Ques What does "Christ Jesus our hope" convey to you?

CAC That the Man of God's purpose is the hope of the saints. It is a Person who is our hope, not events, and the Man of our hope is the anointed Man of God's purpose. There is a retrospect and a prospect in this verse. As to retrospect, if you take account of all that you were and are in the flesh, the Saviour God meets that, and all that exists on your side is an opportunity for the shining in of all that God is. All connected with me as a ruined, fallen creature has been met by God our Saviour, so, if I take account of myself, it only manifests a Saviour God. Then as to prospect, you have nothing before you but the blessed Man of purpose, raised, ascended, and glorified in God's presence, and all the future filled with that Man.

1 TIMOTHY 1 (SECOND READING)

1 Timothy 1

CAC It is very important to see that God has a dispensation in this world, an order of things which is in perfect contrast to everything else, because it is altogether of God. We have to recognise that, have we not?

The responsible side is before us here. It is a question whether we are set to further what is of God; nothing is of value except what furthers faith and love. There is a great deal current in the religious world that is of the nature of "vain discourse" and people's minds are occupied with every conceivable question. What we should earnestly seek for ourselves and for one another is that we should be built up in faith and in love; nothing else is any good. Anything that does not take practical form is of no value; everything of God must be practical and influential. It is nothing to God how much I may hold in my mind as to doctrine; if it is not practical and influential to me it is not much better than vain discourse. The great thing for us is to know God better, and it would necessarily follow that as I grow in the knowledge of Him, I am better able to do His will.

Rem There might be deception in one's soul by acquiring truth, and there being no result.

CAC That is why the apostle says, "faith unfeigned". There might be a profession of faith that was not genuine. The end in view is that love might be active. Faith is not the end, it is the means to an end, and if it is genuine faith, faith unfeigned, it will work love; it could not be genuine faith if it remained dead.

Rem There is a special blessing for the pure in heart.

CAC Yes, "the pure in heart ... see God". Hymenaeus and Alexander lacked these things; they had put away a good conscience and made shipwreck. It is a solemn warning against putting away a good conscience. If you do that you may end by being a blasphemer, and get into the hands of the devil.

Rem People say we cannot be perfect, but here it is set before us.

CAC I think we miss a good deal if we do not recognise that God *is* looking for perfection down here. Christianity is a system of perfection on the side of privilege and of responsibility. *We* are not perfect, of course, but christianity is marked by perfection, and to give that up would be to dishonour God.

We all learn by experience that if we have an inward joy by the knowledge of God, when our practical course is not according to it; we lose that joy.

Everyone has experienced that. We might have a sense of joy in the infinite blessedness of what is spoken of as the glory of the blessed God (verse 11), but if we do not allow that to have its practical working, we lose the joy. That is why there are so few happy christians, so few with hearts overflowing with divine joy.

Rem You find people cling to doctrines and have no joy.

CAC There is not much for God or man in that. If we considered that God is dwelling here it would make a wonderful impression on us. If He is dwelling here, a wonderful state should mark those in whom He dwells, and if there is not such a state, the matter is not remedied by a soul persuading itself it is safe for eternity.

We are rather afraid of such an expression as 'a pure heart', as if it meant perfectionism, but nothing is right for God that does not flow out of a pure heart.

Ques What do you understand by the expression 'a pure heart'?

CAC It is very simple. It is a heart not ruled by self or by double motives, but controlled by the blessed light of God that it enjoys.

Ques In the Old Testament you read of those who were whole-hearted; were they pure-hearted?

CAC Yes, in a certain way, though the real purifying power had not come to light then. I think we see in the Old Testament saints that they went beyond their dispensation. Their dispensation was that of the law and the prophets, yet they went beyond it. *Our* trouble is we do not *rise* to our dispensation.

Ques What is the dispensation?

CAC There was never anything called the dispensation of God until this present time. There never was an order set up which was perfectly according to God's pleasure before. Faith is only mentioned once in the Old Testament, "the just shall live by his faith", and that is looking on to another day. Faith had not come in then. In christianity faith has come, and as a result there is an order according to God, and it all subsists in faith; there is nothing but faith now, it is a system in men's souls. One would not lift a finger to alter a man outwardly; all right movement works from within. If you try to alter a man outwardly, that is the principle of law. We ought to be concerned, not about the outside, but about the inside and where people are with God. It is the character of all service to get people helped inwardly, and, insofar as we have any part in the service of God, that is the thing we should seek; there will be something genuine then that has foundations. If anyone can help me

spiritually as to faith, that lasts, but if I only take a course because it is suggested to me, that is not faith. Faith is the character of the dispensation of God, and we should all be set to further it; every brother and sister should be set to further it. It is contrasted with law. If we are lacking in love out of these three things — a pure heart, a good conscience and unfeigned faith, we are sure to go off on legal lines, the principle of the schoolmaster and the policeman come in. It is a great thing to work for what is inward, and the power is the glory of the blessed God, and that is the standard, too. If we have any light as to the glory of the blessed God, we do not feel happy if we have a bad conscience, though we may try to keep up appearances. Then often to put things right naturally, the principle of law is brought in. If one has got away from grace, the natural thing is to bring in law. If a man goes on habitually in a course of sin in the presence of divine light, at last he gets to feel nothing. He can do dreadful things and know it is wrong, and not feel it a bit.

Ques Is conscience a guide?

CAC Conscience is a check, not exactly a guide. I often say conscience is like a delicate pair of scales, but you must have proper weights. Now that the glory of God has come out, you have a perfect standard, and if you have to say, 'I am not acting like God', that pulls you up, but when you are right the affections are free. The pure heart is a wonderful joy, to be able to think one is doing anything for God's pleasure.

Ques Did conscience come in by the fall?

CAC The knowledge of good and evil came in by the fall. Conscience is an important check on the wickedness of men in the world; man is restrained by conscience to a great extent.

Ques What is "the end" in verse 5?

CAC Everything that has been divinely enjoined. Take all the injunctions in christianity, the end of them all is love, that is the end in view, so it is very simple; everything can be reduced to this element. Take any point of ecclesiastical order, or any principles, they are all the actings of love reduced to its natural elements. If love is acting, I shall not steal, or kill or bear false witness; I do not want a man's ox, or his ass, or anything that is his. The sting of the law is in its tail, when it says, "Thou shalt not covet", but God has taken pains in the gospel to deliver us from that, for if all things are ours, what have we got to covet!

When Paul exercised himself to have a conscience void of offence, he doubtless turned over in his mind if he had acted contrary to love. We think of

a seared conscience as if it might be a murderer's, but it is what comes through day by day neglecting what is due to God. We should challenge our hearts in God's presence, and ask, Was it love that led me to do that? We may carry out our service in a purely legal way.

Verse 4 refers to the teachers, men who allowed their minds to work on unprofitable lines. There is a needs-be of guarding against the mind working on lines not to profit, which are thoughts of the human mind, legal principles, and getting away from the glory of the blessed God. His glory is the activity of His love, and that is what the enemy is seeking to obscure. It is to come out in His saints because He dwells in them. Think of God dwelling in this world! Where is His palace, His shrine? It is His saints. The moment you bring in the glory of the blessed God, it rebukes everything that is wrong, you do not need law, you have a perfect standard for everything. It goes beyond the law altogether. The law does not propose to go further than this, that you work no ill to your neighbour, but there is something quite different now; the blessed God has come out as a powerful source of good, and His saints are to be here as sources of good, thinking of the good of others! The world's principle is to do your neighbour no harm, that is responsibility fulfilled under law; but in christianity we are to do people good, that is a positive line. It is such a treat to further the good of another; there is not a purer joy that can be possessed by the human heart.

Ques Do you mean spiritually?

CAC I was thinking of spiritual things, but it applies to natural things. If you had a chance of doing someone a kind act, you would have a pure joy. We know what good is, all good has come to light in the glory of the blessed God. God accounts as His glory the scope He has given to His love. The glory of the blessed God has come in as the spring of love. I covet the state of mind that thinks of the good of others. It is not a question of how far you can work it out; that is a question of divine sovereignty; some have large and some have small opportunities, but what is the spirit of one's mind? Are we in the spirit of benefactors? Do we love good and feel that we are trustees for it, that we hold it for others?

Rem Peter speaks of our having purified our hearts unto unfeigned love of the brethren.

CAC And he says, "See that ye love one another". Let nothing interfere with the working out of love.

1 TIMOTHY 1 (THIRD READING)

1 Timothy 1

CAC We were seeing last week that the danger is that teaching might be brought in that is contrary to the true standard. The standard now is not the law but the gospel, that is, the glory of the blessed God has shone forth in the way of glad tidings for man, and when we come into the sphere of what God is for man, we find everything centering in a risen and glorified Man.

Rem So in 2 Corinthians 4 we find the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ.

CAC It is most blessed for us to dwell on these things, that God has put Himself into relation with men, and into communication with men, in a Man. God has come near, not in a mysterious and unknowable way, but in a Man. The truth of the Mediator is very important, and when we come into the sphere of grace we find that everything is administered by that blessed Man, as a Man risen, glorified in heaven, and He is the One in whom, and by whom, God is acting. All God's acting towards Saul of Tarsus was by that Man.

Ques Are we not often content with the knowledge of the gospel of grace, without glory? While grace relieves us, it is only glory that transforms us.

CAC Yes, we limit it very much to meeting a sense of need. I do not think we get a proper thought of salvation apart from that. The real thought of salvation is that we should be for God, His great thought would be to make known what He is.

Rem I suppose God does not attain His end unless we are brought into conformity with what He is.

CAC We shall be fully conformed by and by, but we are being conformed now. God said of Israel, "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise". No doubt Satan thought he had scored a great triumph when he took man away from God, and brought about the fall, but God has reversed all this, so that His creatures should know Him in a way that no creatures could have known Him in an eternity of innocence.

Rem The depravity of man forms a dark background on which the attributes of God shine forth. We see this in God's dealings with Saul of Tarsus.

CAC And God takes up that same created being. He does not destroy him, he saves him and brings him into an entirely new condition morally which is to God's own praise. God's salvation is very great, we narrow it up often. The salvation is worthy of the blessed God. If God moves He must move in a kingly

way. It is very striking the title here, "the King of the ages", that is what God is to the apostle. It is royal grace, grace acting in royal supremacy, it is very much the character of sovereignty here. So what the apostle has to say is all what Christ Jesus does. A Person has done wonderful things, and Paul is taken up with Him. We are not definite enough in testifying to what He has done for us. Paul is very personal; he says, He has saved me, He has given me power, He has done this and that.

Rem Paul was the chief of sinners.

CAC That brings out the skill of the One who saved him, the far-reaching power that has stretched out to the extreme point to save. Salvation is looked at more here from the side of the privilege of serving. It sets one free from all that hinders one from serving God. "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life", Luke 1: 74. That is the idea of salvation. The first thing Paul says is, 'He gave me power, He put me into the ministry. That is what that glorious Man in heaven did for me!' The fact that Paul was a blasphemer and a persecutor only brought out the wonderful character of grace that was in a Man in heaven. It gives one a great idea of salvation to see it in Paul; a man who was a bitter enemy of God and of Christ becomes a devoted servant. That gives the measure of salvation; Christ can take up the chief of sinners, and make him a happy devoted servant. Salvation brings out the character of grace. There was not an incident in the life of Christ on earth that brought out grace like the salvation of Paul; there was no instance of a bitter enemy becoming a friend. The nearest to it is the thief on the cross who railed on the Lord and afterwards turned to Him, but that was not like a life of enmity. We see in Saul a life of enmity, and that brings out the royal character, the kingly supremacy of grace. God is the "King of the ages"; He rises up in kingly supremacy and says, I will reverse all the enmity of that man's heart for my glory. There was everything active in Saul to overcome. And then such a character of grace! "He counted me faithful". That was shown by the Lord giving him an appointment to the ministry; that brings out the Lord's grace. I should not like to count *myself* faithful, but it is an immense encouragement to think of the Lord counting me faithful. That is Paul's estimate of his Master; Paul says, He has given me this work to do because He counted me faithful.

Ques Was this Paul's first impression of Christ?

CAC Paul is looking back, and thinking according to the knowledge he then had of the Lord. It is not the great light that dawned on him, but Christ Jesus the Lord was such a blessed reality to him, One who had spoken to him and he had heard His voice. Paul was summing up his thoughts of that Person, and

what He had done for him. Paul says, "He has given me power". The Lord always begins by setting you up; if He wants you to do anything, He gives efficiency. Every servant is made competent before he is set to work. What was before Paul was the peculiar sense of the grace of the Lord, that the Lord should put him on the footing of a faithful servant before he had done anything. That gives you power. If you have a Master who counts you faithful you would like to do anything for such a Master. We want a deeper sense of the way the Lord looks at things, He has furnished me with power. He wants every one of us to feel we are servants confided in by the One we serve, and we shall not serve properly until we feel that. The greater part of the service of christendom is legal, as if the Lord was marking all our failure and feebleness, but what He is noticing is what is well done.

Rem The Lord entrusted Peter with service after his failure, showing He had confidence in him.

CAC Yes, the grace of the Lord is so wonderful! How little one has known Him after so long. What a footing He puts His servants on! He counted Paul faithful before he had done a stroke of work, and then at the end of the course He says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant". The Lord from start to finish of the course counts His servants faithful, and if that is how He looks on me, how I long to be what His grace counts me! Woe betide me if I disappoint Him!

All this is apostolic, but the principle applies to everyone. The measure of gift and service is a matter of sovereignty; one may be an apostle, and another only able to lie in bed and pray for the saints. The Lord's attitude is the same to all who serve, He has not favourite servants; some are divinely fitted to take a large place, and some a small place, but His thought is the same for them all.

Ques In Old Testament times they had to win their spurs, but now is everything conferred on the servants?

CAC Yes, the Lord distributes His goods, that is the footing on which He starts them. We ought to feel He has *trusted* me; He gave me a pound, and what am I going to do with what He Has confided to me? It is a powerful incentive to devotedness, but one feels ashamed we should be such poor servants with such a Master.

Then we were seeing in a former meeting that the dispensation of God is in faith, and the end of all enjoined is love. Faith and love are what God has before Him to bring about in man, and now (verse 14), we find they are supplied by the grace of our Lord, they are supplied from heaven. This is a

summing up of salvation; man is brought into faith exercised towards God, and love exercised towards man. The man who has these two requisites is saved; he is in right relation to God by faith, and to man by love. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners", to put them into that blessed relation.

Rem We have not to be concerned about others' service, but only to follow.

CAC Yes, that is the only thing we have to do. The Lord said to Peter, Never mind others, follow me. It makes it all so simple, and such a system of liberty. The Lord is just as able to make me what He wants, as He was Paul. We need to be content. I often tell the Lord I would like to be what He wants to make me, nothing more. We may fall short, or try to go beyond. God is a God of measure, and He allots to everyone the right place, and He can effect perfectly all He desires in us if we are subject and follow Him. He can effect all in us according to the place He would have us fill.

You cannot surpass faith and love. The smallest servant who is acting in faith and love is morally as great as an apostle. An apostle may act in a large sphere, but he cannot go beyond faith and love; and we may act in a small sphere, but we cannot go beyond faith and love. We may all have a desire to serve, and there is never any need for jealousy. If I see a person doing more than I can, I delight in it; it is one of my greatest joys to see people doing so much. The great thing is the character of the men who serve, not the amount of their service, but that it should be the outcome of faith and love in Christ Jesus. There is a new order of man brought in for God's pleasure, and that man is saved. Service flows from faith and love, and not from obligation.

Ques The apostle speaks of grace and mercy. What is the difference?

CAC Mercy takes account of the desperate condition in which man was found; it leads one to think of that.

Ques Is mercy sovereignty? "I will shew mercy on whom I will".

CAC Yes, but that shows it is a desperate case, but if you think of favour (that is grace), you think rather of what springs in the heart of God. Favour is a different thought from mercy. Mercy and compassion are near akin; God acts in compassion and shows mercy from His own side; that shows the desperate state of man, but grace is more what is in the heart of God. God has not only compassion on a wretched sinner, but there is a blessed thought of favour in His heart. There is nothing more wonderful in the mercy of God than that He should pity His poor guilty creature. He says: I pity you, you are sinning against me with a high hand, but instead of being angry I have compassion, you do not know what you are doing! If you think of what God is, it is marvellous that He bears with His sinful creatures, and that He does not

sweep them away. The most terrible thing that ever was done the Lord viewed with compassion. If we see dreadful things done, we feel that they ought to be punished. Well, the most terrible thing ever done, the murder of the Son of God, was viewed with compassion by the One who suffered it, and He prayed to His Father that He might view it with compassion, too; and He did.

Ques How do we get the grace of the Lord Jesus?

CAC It was grace that administered faith and love, they are not demanded, they are supplied. God does not say you must have faith and love, but He supplies them in the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the result is an entirely new order of man in this world, men characterised by faith and love, and by being in Christ Jesus: a new kind of man in this world. "Faith and love ... in Christ Jesus" shows us distinctly the moral force of the term "in Christ Jesus". It is a present moral reality; it is not only God's purpose in Christ in heaven to have us like that glorified Man by and by, but it is faith and love in Christ now. There is a people marked morally by what is not Adam at all. The same created being, once fallen, and lost, and marked by everything contrary to God, is now recovered in a new order altogether, and that new order is characterised by faith and love. It is not Adam patched up, it is a new order.

Rem The more faith works by love, the more grace one would have.

CAC Yes, if you make good use of the grace the Lord supplies, you would get some more.

Then it is interesting to think there is a course marked out for every servant from the outset, "According to the prophecies which went before". Paul says to Timothy, I am charging you not on the ground of what I should like you to be, but on the ground of the prophecies. Let every christian take that home; it is true in principle that a course is marked out for every christian. Paul could say, "I have finished my course" — it was marked out for me, and I have covered every step in it. And now he tells Timothy to see he does the same. The course is a moral course, it is the maintenance of faith and a good conscience.

Rem The course being marked out would not justify anyone waiting and doing nothing.

CAC It would be rather the other way, "that thou ... mightest war a good warfare". The very consciousness that the course is marked out is a source of strength. Divine sovereignty never has the effect of bringing people into fatalism.

Rem It is quite true, of course, as to Timothy, but I never heard of any prophecies going before on ordinary people.

CAC I quite accept that this is a speciality in Paul and Timothy, but it would not be brought before us here if there was not a principle in it. Mr. Stoney used to say that what a man was brought up to was connected with his service; he said once, 'I was brought up to the law and I am going on circuit still'; my father said, 'And I was a shepherd'. Mr. Stoney answered, 'And you are a shepherd still'. The disciples were fishermen, and they were called to be fishers of men. The course we take is not a matter of indifference to the Lord, and faith is very important. We have a certain measure, and we should be up to it. J.N.D. said, 'Do not go beyond your faith, and do not lag behind your conscience'. There is the side of sovereignty, and if that is rightly apprehended, it produces zeal and there is a jealous desiring. As to gift it is a subject of desire. It is a great indication that the Lord has called one to a service when one desires to do it, and if you desire to do a thing you pray about it. You soon see in a young convert what he is going to be by the way his desires work.

1 TIMOTHY 2 (FIRST READING)

1 Timothy 2

CAC There must be maintenance of personal condition of soul according to the end of chapter 1 before we can take up this chapter.

Ques You mean there must be faith and a good conscience? There could not be lifting up of holy hands without?

CAC Yes, the effect of grace would be to bring about moral suitability; that is, the revelation of God in grace must have a profound effect. *The* faith is the revelation of God in grace, and if it does not produce its proper moral effect people lose it and make shipwreck, that is the end.

Ques Why is a good conscience so much emphasised in Timothy?

CAC Because it lies at the root of all the soul's relation with God. If a good conscience is given up you have lost your link with God, and that would lead to antinomianism, that is, that grace leaves you free to go on with the old line of things, whereas grace really puts you on an entirely *new* line of things.

Rem The Christian is looked at here as a vessel for testimony, and as such it is important he should be real. Those who form the house of God must be true and be kept in true relation to God by the maintenance of faith and a good conscience.

CAC If God brings in a testimony it must be maintained in a suitable vessel. God's house is marked by holiness, and holiness is very much maintained by the exercise of prayer.

Ques What does being delivered to Satan mean?

CAC I think the apostle was able by his power to give up these men to some special discipline; the object of it was that they should be disciplined. It was an act of power on the part of the apostle so that they were given up to discipline. This was a case of men who had given up a good conscience and made shipwreck, they were blasphemers, they spoke injuriously of divine Persons, and they came under a severe form of discipline. Prayer should characterise the saints, then they would be kept from making shipwreck.

Ques Is not this with regard to the company?

CAC Yes, but maintaining faith and a good conscience is individual. When you say 'the company' you do not mean to confine it to when we are together. It says "pray everywhere" (verse 8).

Ques Would it not be the good of the testimony of God we should have at heart?

CAC It is the testimony of God to maintain these things, to maintain that God is thinking of the good of man. He is favourable to man and there is a place on earth where it is understood and entered on; so the gate of heaven is very near to man, it is not a long way off. What a thought of God, even if you only take the side that He would have us lead tranquil lives! (verse 2).

Ques Are we to pray, because our exercise should be that room should be made here for the testimony to go on, or is a tranquil life freedom from persecution?

CAC Freedom from things that might be distracting; such things happen and if saints are distracted the testimony is enfeebled.

Verse 2 is a parenthesis. The main thought is that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men, ... for this is good and acceptable before our Saviour God". Verse 2 takes account of God's government in this world, and the saints are indebted to God's government for tranquility. If we had no police we should not lead a very quiet life.

God's house should be known as a house of prayer, a house of supply, but when the Lord came He found it a place where people were being robbed. Men ought to know God's house, where He is a Giver. Christendom *now* makes the impression on people that God's house is a place where things can be got out of them.

Rem Eternal life should be seen there, and God's house no longer a place of robbery, it is to be a house of supply.

CAC Yes. Verse 1 is what is to mark the saints as composing the house of God. It is not only when we come together; it is the character of the pillar which God has set up; it is always there whether we come together or not. What marks it is a company of people praying for all men; they are marked individually and therefore collectively.

Ques What is your thought as to "first of all"?

CAC We ought to remember that *we* are to give voice to everything according to God, whether it is the dependence of a creature and the confidingness of those who know His love, or the thanksgiving of those who have His general benefits all find a voice in the house of God. Who praises God now for a harvest or for sunshine? Every saint ought to have a harvest thanksgiving. It is a poor thing if God lavishes His good things and not a voice from the saints thanks Him. Nature always grumbles, but we must "in every thing give

thanks". We have to voice the thanksgiving of creation for the sunshine and rain, for the fruitful seasons, for the fulness of the earth "filling our hearts with food and gladness", Acts 14. We take it up in detail, and give thanks intelligently for all the wonderful wealth of God's bounty filling His creature with good things. In God's house everything gets a thanksgiving, there is such a comprehensive field of joy and thanksgiving. You would not rob God of thanksgiving! We thank God for all things. The saints give thanks "for all men".

Ques Do we think more of the mercy side? "His mercy endureth for ever".

CAC Mercy should be lovingkindness there. All the natural good is the outcome of God's lovingkindness. When you come to spiritual good, that is deeper, but every note of praise is sounded in the house of God.

The great and special thought here is that God is a Saviour God, and He is known, and people are near to Him in the sense of what He is. J.N.D. has a note in the New Translation to the word 'intercession', 'personal and confiding intercourse with God on the part of one able to approach Him'. It is such a sweet thought to be near to Him.

Rem It puts great dignity on us to pray for men.

CAC It puts the saints on a higher platform than those in authority. We do not look down on them; but there is a moral dignity about saints who can pray. There was a bright spot in Jacob's life when he blessed the greatest monarch on the face of the earth; he was a poor old man but he was superior to Pharaoh. The world is marked by murmuring and complaining; we should be marked by prayer and thankfulness.

Rem Each one in the house of God ought to be imbued with the desire that all men should be saved.

CAC Yes, and we should look at people in general in that way. That would preserve us from feelings of resentment to our enemies; we should see them as poor creatures whom God is so willing to bless. God approves of this in His saints (verse 3); it is a wonderful power to be on a line that you feel God approves, that God's estimate is that it is good. There is no power in anything if you have not the sense that it is approved of God. The Spirit would always give us the consciousness of God's approval if we fulfil the conditions laid down in Scripture. In the New Testament it is always supposed that the saints are marked by doing what God approves.

Rem Men are to lift up holy hands, that is like "the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice", Psalm 141.

CAC Yes. We were saying last week that this aspect of salvation is that we should be delivered and free to serve. All this we are speaking of is the service of the house of God; it is service on the testimony side, the intercessory side of priesthood. It is more the character of royal priesthood, it sets forth the royal side, it is "the King of the ages", God's title in grace.

Ques What aspect of the death of Christ does the ransom bring before us?

CAC That the price is paid on the ground of which all men may go free and come into the service of God.

Ques Does it correspond with the mercy-seat; Romans 3?

CAC Yes, what underlies it is that God would have men free to serve Him.

Rem God could only approach us in a Mediator.

CAC Yes, the distance between God and men is so great, so infinite, that you must have a Mediator. If God is to come near to men, it must be in a Mediator, there must be a medium of communication, and that is the Man Christ Jesus. It is the blessed God acting in grace, coming near to men, not to a few, not to the elect people, but to *men*. And He does it on the ground of the death of Christ, so that God does not soil His holiness in coming near to men. He does not admit of any stain on His righteousness or holiness. He puts Himself into the most blessed communication with His fallen creature. The mediatorship is all founded on ransom, a ransom paid once and for everyone; thus He *is* the Mediator.

Ques Does the Mediator include what Christ is as Saviour, Advocate and Priest?

CAC Mediatorship is on God's part *manward*, that is, between God and men. Advocacy and priesthood are offices on man's part Godward, but as Mediator Christ fills a wonderful part towards men.

1 TIMOTHY 2 (SECOND READING)

1 Timothy 2

Rem I think you were saying last week that prayer was to mark the house of God. It is to be the house of prayer.

CAC Yes, certainly. Supply, not demand, marks God's attitude today. If we are near to Him and in sympathy with His thoughts and purposes, we shall know how to pray as priests. We too often pray as beggars. We pray because of our poverty; but, if we were nearer to the Lord, we should learn to pray as priests. We should so understand God's delight in giving and blessing that we should supplicate for all men, because God's will is that blessing should go out towards *all*. We should not be saying, "My leanness, my leanness", like a poor beggar, but we should be in such enjoyment of the fatness of God's house ourselves that in priestly dignity and grace we should become sources of supply to the whole Christian company, and to the needy world around. So many of our prayers are in reality an effort to bring God round to thinking as we do, and as we want Him to think, but instead of that, what blessing we should get and confer if we got before God and asked Him to teach us what His thoughts are! The house of God is a scene of movement, it is "the church of the *living* God". There is no stagnation, but the living energy of grace, because the living God is in His house. I do not think that people realise the stupendous fact that God is here! If you asked a number of Christians, What is the greatest fact today? what would they tell you? The greatest fact is that God is dwelling here in His house, and that is what makes it a place of holy liberty. We are too much like Quakers when we come together! I think sometimes we sit here and wait for the Spirit to move us! That is not it at all. We are drawn together by the love and grace of God's heart to be at home in His presence, in holy liberty to speak to Him, and to hear Him speak to us. We all know what it is, in our varying measures, to have a home and to go there. We get through our business outside as quickly as we can and then we go *home*. Do we want to be *moved* to speak to wife, or children? No, all is spontaneous. There is happy liberty in the home, and that is what should obtain in the house of God. There would be no long pauses in our meetings and no waiting for special movements of the Spirit, if we were near enough to the Lord to enjoy the holy liberty of sons.

Rem We are not always in assembly and we ought to be in the Spirit of sonship and liberty before God all the week.

CAC Undoubtedly, we are always in God's house, and if we are marked by the faith and love that is in Christ Jesus in our individual path, keeping in view the

end of what is enjoined, love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, I think we shall be quite ready to take up priestly service in prayer and praise when we come together in assembly. We shall know that God has a base of operation in this world, and that His assembly is set as the pillar and base of the truth, and all the outgoings of our activities will be in accord with that.

Rem I suppose we are really to act in our measure as mediators, as well as priests, between God and this poor world, and therein be like Christ.

CAC Yes, Moses was both mediator and priest. Moses was a greater priest than Aaron. As the tabernacle of witness, we are to carry the ark of the testimony through this world. We are to enshrine the ark. What dignity that confers and what holiness it demands! The tabernacle was constantly on the move; every board, every curtain, every pin, had to be carried. I hope we do not shirk our burden. There is not one of us, brother or sister, who has not something to carry under the direction of the Priest. The ark was never called the ark of the testimony in the land. It was the ark of the covenant after Jordan, but now, in the wilderness, it is enshrined and borne by the assembly as the ark of the testimony. It is a moment of inestimable privilege, never to recur. Would that we were more alive to it!

Ques The women have their part, too, have they not? Men are to be characterised by prayer, and women by decent deportment?

CAC Yes, and women can pray, too, though not aloud in the meetings. What a power for good is a praying woman! When I was a youngster there were several old sisters who really cared for my soul, and they *prayed* for me. I do not know *what* I owe to their prayers! Women are to be clothed in good works. They will not think whether this or that will be becoming to *them*, but what will be suitable to the testimony.

Ques It says that men are to lift up pious hands without wrath or reasoning. What are "pious hands"?

CAC Hands that would not *touch* anything unsuited to God. We have often been told that piety brings God into our things; and if God comes in, everything not in accord with God must go out. It is wonderful how gracious God is in this way and how near to us He comes. We see in the next chapter that, when we sit down to a meal, we have the happiness of "freely addressing him". He is there at the table with us, not a long way off. How beautiful it is! Why, is it not the very best bit of the dinner that we can freely address Him? It sanctifies and elevates the meal — the word of God — that is His speaking to us, and He has spoken to us in such grace that it has set our

hearts at liberty to freely address Him! Is it not elevating? When the common things of life are touched in piety they are lifted on to another plane altogether. There is great happiness and "great gain" in godliness. If men had not "holy hands", they certainly could not pray.

Rem Prayer seems to mark this epistle very much.

CAC The great apostle had unfolded all the counsel of God at Ephesus. It was a place that had been marked as the devil's headquarters. The shrine of the great goddess Diana was there and there was much demoniacal activity in Ephesus. God said, 'I am going to set up *My* shrine in Ephesus', and He did so. Well now, Paul said to Timothy, 'I am departing, but I charge you to maintain the holy order of God's house in Ephesus'.

Rem The apostle John had to write to Ephesus rather differently in the Revelation.

CAC Yes, and so had Paul in his second epistle to Timothy. All that he had warned them about in Acts 20 had come in and developed then. But we must not lose sight of it that they *had stood*. John says, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen". That clearly implies that there had been a previous time when the church in Ephesus *had stood* in responsibility. We should all seek to be Timothys. The powerful and richly endowed apostle has gone, but he has left us a solemn charge to be Timothys, to watch over and guard the precious order of God's house, and be centres of influence for good. When I speak of God's house, of course, I include all saints, all believers. I do not narrow it up and make a sect of ourselves. We are part of the great company whose names are enregistered in heaven, the assembly of the first-born ones. If a little more light has been granted to us, it is not that we may plume ourselves upon it and despise others. It is entrusted to us, that in some way it may be made effective for all, for the whole sanctified company. It is as when one drops a pebble into a pool and the circle widens out to its utmost brim.

Ques How would you distinguish between an overseer and a minister?

CAC I think an overseer is one who watches for souls and seeks to shepherd them, and a deacon has more the charge of ministering in a temporal way to the necessities of saints, but I dare say the work of both often overlapped.

Rem Anyone who aspired to overseership desired a good work, and had to be irreproachable personally.

CAC Yes, we were reminded last night that we are never asked to do anything that has not already been done. It is beautiful to see that livingly exemplified in the Lord's life on earth. He acted as both Bishop and Deacon perfectly. That

is a great encouragement for the feeblest of us, to follow in His steps. Confessedly the mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh. There has been a blessed Man moving about amongst men, who has in every activity of His life manifested what God is in His love and grace to men, and the Spirit has justified that Man: the witness of it is that He has been received up into glory. The mystery of piety is great. Man was perfectly delightful to God, God too was perfectly presented to men, and the Spirit was the justification and verification of both in the Mediator and the Priest who has passed into the heavens.

1 TIMOTHY 3

1 Timothy 3

Ques How do you distinguish between the house and the assembly in verse 15?

CAC I think the house suggests a dwelling-place for God. An assembly is convened for the transaction of business in the world, and the assembly of the living God is the place where His business, if one may say so, is carried on.

Rem We are not always convened.

CAC No, we are not, but we are always part of the assembly of the living God wherever we are and if we are true to that, His interests are always uppermost with us, and we exercise a jealous care not to misrepresent Him. It is the assembly of the living God where all the blessed activities of His love and grace emanate from.

I suppose love is the most prominent and characteristic of His activities and that it comes out in the ways of saints towards each other. Do we not get a hint as to God's dwelling-place in 1 John 3: 23, 24? The character and the very nature of God must come out in His household. Of course He gives character to it. It could not be otherwise. What a wonderful place that puts the assembly in! All that can ever be known in this world of God must be known through the church. It can only be known or reach any human understanding as seen in man. God has recurred to His original thought and intention, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". God has been perfectly presented to the universe in a Man. And how has He presented Himself? That is the marvel. Creation was a comparatively simple thing, "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast". It was an act of power. But when we come to redemption and the revelation of God in His essential nature, that was a very different thing. It involved suffering in lowly grace, in a Man, to vindicate God and reveal the blessed thought of His heart, and so the Son of the Father's love said, "Lo, I come": the Man who perfectly answered to God in everything. That was far greater than creation.

Ques What do you understand by the pillar and base of the truth?

CAC The truth is all that may be known of God in this world and the pillar is set up as a witness to it. The base is that which gives stability to the pillar. It gives one a fine idea of fulfilled responsibility, that the assembly of the living God *is* the pillar and base of the truth. God always secures His own ends.

All this is written to the end that one might know how one ought to conduct oneself in the house of God. It is not what doctrines we hold in our heads, but our conduct that tells, and is the testimony. That involves the mystery of piety.

Ques. What is piety?

CAC All that is of God in this world as seen in the saints. It is giving God His place in everything. It has all been livingly set forth in a Man, in the blessed Lord, and is seen now in the saints. Look at His very first recorded utterance at twelve years of age: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" That was piety. At twelve years old the Lord had no other interest on earth than His Father's business, and that gives us the dominating keynote of all those thirty years of hidden life. They were spent about His Father's business. After the incident at Jerusalem, it is recorded of that holy One that He returned home with His parents and was subject unto them. *That* was piety! And when there were a few repentant people beginning to turn to God and to seek Him, the Lord said, 'I must identify myself with these people'. *That* was piety. God said, 'I can justify such a Man as that by My Spirit', and the Spirit descended and abode upon Him. I love what is said of Christ, "I have exalted one chosen out of the people ... with my holy oil have I anointed him", Psalm 89. It was as though God looked down upon this world and, casting His eye over all its inhabitants, He could pick out one Man upon whom He could look with absolute delight, and exalt Him and with His holy oil anoint Him. He said in effect, 'That Man is wholly for Me, He is morally suitable to be anointed'. God justified Him in the Spirit. There was a holy savour, a savour of God about all that He said and did. Look at Him at Emmaus when He took the loaf and broke the bread and gave thanks. They knew Him immediately. There was that about Him which no disguise could hide. Their eyes had been holden, but directly He addressed God, they knew Him. That was piety: it distinguished Him. I had always connected it with the passage in Hebrews where it says that in the garden He was heard because of His piety.

Rem I suppose the angels saw God for the first time at the incarnation.

CAC Yes. I have often thought of how all heaven was astir to see that wondrous sight. Earth became a scene of the deepest interest to heaven as soon as the Son assumed manhood. The angels had known a time before the earth had any existence. They sang for joy when it emerged in all its freshness and beauty from the Lord's hand, but that was nothing to their interest when He Himself became a Man and for the first time the angels saw their God.

Rem *We* have come to the universal gathering of the angels; Hebrews 12.

CAC Yes; they look down now to see God's beautiful order in His house, with deepest interest and concern, but they cannot see what is not there. How it should exercise us, and what deep interest we also should take in the assembly! Why we are made a spectacle to angels! We often think of how we look in the eyes of the saints, we think, too, of what the world sees in us, but how often do we take account of how we appear to the angels? *They* see us in private, when the eyes of the brethren, or the world, are not upon us. The apostle had to get down on his knees about it and ask wonderful things for the saints, in order that *now* might be known through the assembly, the all-various wisdom of God, to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies. Just think of it! They once looked down upon Jesus in His holy pathway through this world, and now they look down upon us, whom He has left to be a continuation of Himself down here, now that He has been received up into glory. All this mystery of piety should be found in holy activity in the saints. Satan's great aim is to mar this, to get between the soul and God in such wise as to make us dishonour Him. We see it in the next few verses — he would pervert God's very mercies to this end and oust God from our natural life, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats — two of God's greatest mercies in nature. I suppose if Satan could get a saint to eat his food without thanking God, he would consider he had scored a victory! We have a place with God of nearness and affection and holy liberty that no angel ever had or ever will have.

We see the interest of the angels in the Lord's earthly pathway in the way they succoured Him. They rejoiced at His birth and sang glory to God in the highest, and on earth good pleasure in men, then we find them waiting upon the Lord in the wilderness after His temptation, and again in the garden in His agony, strengthening Him, and sitting in triumph on the stone rolled away from His tomb and watching the place where His body had lain. Their solicitude is very marked. We do not think enough about angels, they are mentioned many times in the New Testament.

Ques Why do you think that it is called a mystery — "the mystery of piety"?

CAC It does not lie on the surface. There are several mysteries we are told about. A mystery is something that can only be understood by the initiated. We can only get at it through exercise. No divine mystery can be understood apart from exercise of heart with God about it. Only initiates can enter into a mystery.

1 TIMOTHY 4 (FIRST READING)

1 Timothy 4

Ques "The Spirit speaks expressly". Would you consider that a special revelation, or the voice of the Spirit speaking in the assembly to call attention to a certain matter?

CAC I had thought it was the latter. It is a great thing to be where the Spirit's voice can be heard, where the orders of God are — an immense privilege. All the mind of God is made known in the assembly — it is where the oracles are enshrined.

Ques We have just had the mystery of piety. Would you call what we get in these verses (1 - 3) the working of the mystery of iniquity?

CAC Those who apostatise from the faith "give their minds" to these demons, who are always watching to instil wrong thoughts of God.

Ques What would preserve from that?

CAC The habitual sense that God is near to us. In Old Testament times God was in heaven, and man upon earth. That is, God was a long way off, but directly you turn to the New Testament the first thing you find is "God with us" Emmanuel. If you read in the end of the Old Testament and then turn to the beginning of the New Testament, you cannot help being struck with the difference. God has drawn near to man in the Person of His Son, and He has drawn near in such grace that every element of bondage has disappeared. We can freely address Him even about such simple matters as the food we eat.

Ques In what way would you say that our food has been sanctified by the word of God?

CAC Is it not what is said in Genesis 9, after God smelled the sweet savour of the burnt-offering? "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you: even as the green herb have I given you all things".

Rem Spiritualists command to abstain from meats.

CAC Yes, it is a doctrine of demons. "Forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats". God's mercy has provided certain things for man's present condition, and Satan robs him of them, if he gives heed to seducing spirits. "Laying these things before the brethren, thou wilt be a good minister of Christ Jesus".

Ques Why is it always "Christ Jesus" in this epistle?

CAC Because it refers to the anointed Man who is received up in glory. How important food is! "Nourished with the words of faith and of the good teaching which thou hast fully followed up". Piety is profitable for everything, having the promise of the life that now is as well as that which is to come. Mr. Raven used to say, If we were more pious we should have better health. The inveterate turn of our natural mind is to be independent of God, and instead of turning to God about our health, we call in a doctor! I am not decrying Luke the beloved physician, or any other physician, but what I do say is, that we have full liberty to go to God and tell Him every ache and pain, and that it is much better and happier to walk in full dependence on Him and enjoy His personal care and sympathy. Piety recognises and counts upon God's interest and nearness. "Exercise thyself unto piety". That is the best kind of exercise. A quiet confidence in God is very conducive to health.

Ques Why do you think the words occur here again that are used in chapter 1: 15 in connection there with saving sinners, but here in connection with saints? "The word is faithful and worthy of all acceptation; for, for this we labour", etc. What do you think about it?

CAC I think the apostle laboured in preaching the word faithfully and it brought him into reproach. I think that a person who does not work is disorderly, and it is distinctly said that if a man does not *work*, he is not to *eat*. In Ephesians it says, "Let him labour ... with his hands ... that he may have to give". That is not preaching the gospel. I think that a man that sits and reads all the newest things and goes to meetings and perhaps preaches occasionally but never works is a blot on the testimony. He may have private means and have no need to work for his living, but he has got *some* work to do, and if he does not do it, he is a blot on the testimony. Of the blessed Lord it is recorded that He went about doing *good*.

Rem Yes, and He worked as a carpenter.

CAC Mr. Stoney used to say that if a brother gave up his ordinary work for work directly in the Lord's service, and did not work as hard, or harder in that than in his former avocation, he would come to grief.

1 TIMOTHY 4 (SECOND READING)

1 Timothy 4

CAC The ways of a servant must be in Christ as well as his teaching. In commending Timothy to the Corinthians Paul says, "He worketh the work of the Lord as I also do"; 'When you see Timothy you will be reminded of me'. Paul's ways were in Christ. A new character of things has come in, and there are men now down here in this world who are in Christ, and that being so their ways must be in Christ also. We all know for a fact that, if a man speaks of Christ, and his ways are different, he has no weight with us. The Spirit has come in so that one's ways might be in Christ practically. If the bondslave has been cast out it is to make way for Christ.

All the practical part of the New Testament (and the most part is practical) gives one a very good idea of what it is to have one's ways in Christ. It brings in an entirely new character of things morally derived from Christ and not from Adam. Every tree produces fruit after its kind. It is a principle of service that a servant can never bring a disciple beyond where he is himself. When Timothy went to Corinth, the Corinthians recognised Paul in him; his ministry and his ways were like Paul. He was a true child of Paul, and derived his character from him; he had the same exercises as Paul; Paul could weep, and Timothy had wept with Paul about the saints. Paul said, "I am mindful of thy tears". Saints do not do much of that nowadays. There was the same genuine feeling in Timothy as in Paul.

Ques What does it mean, "Let no man despise thy youth?"

CAC He was to carry himself with such gravity that there could be nothing brought against him; no one would be able to say, 'He is only a young man, he will have more ballast presently'. He was so to carry himself that no one could bring any charge against him. Christ was to be seen in him, and sobriety was to mark him, so that no one could call in question his authority. He had great moral authority; it supposes authority to be moral, not official, in the house of God.

It has been said that we are never asked to do anything that has not been already done; we are not entitled to ask others to do what we ourselves are not doing. If I exhort another, I must examine myself. Paul never exhorted people to do what was not exemplified in himself. The Lord Jesus exhorted the disciples to do what had already been seen in Himself. The true servant says, 'Follow', not 'Go'. You see the principle in an officer who leads his men and does not drive them before him. That is the difference between law and grace.

The true servant takes the lead and says, 'I will show you the way'. Look at the many references Paul makes to his own life and service and spirit! It is astonishing. The apostle could present himself and his ways as a model. No one could say that those things are impossible. If only we gave the true Isaac His place all would be well. Paul gave Christ His place from first to last. Christ reigned in his heart, and his ways and teaching were of Christ. If Christ has His place all will be right.

Paul began with the gospel, and the proper sense of what the gospel is. God had come in to relieve his need, to deliver him morally, and to set him free to be here for the will of God, and the only right thing for the christian is to be here for God's will. The truth of justification (Romans 3) has been made to overshadow Romans 6 - Romans 8. You must be clear from every charge, but that would not satisfy any godly person. People take as much of the gospel as suits them, but there needs to be the knowledge of God. It is a question of God coming in grace; the Lord becomes the pledge and promise of everything so that we may be here for the will of God; every honest soul desires that. Christ was God's pious One. God always had His place in the heart of Christ. God was always before Him, and He did everything in relation to God. That is true piety.

Ques Was Timothy set as a model before the believer, or did he express the peculiar characteristics of those who believed?

CAC I think both. What a power of salvation there is about a man who is always doing the will of God! His ways correspond with his teaching. It is the spirit of the man that is the test. Timothy was to show forth the character of God's salvation amongst the saints. The great thing is to see the kind of man that can carry the testimony. He is to be a model for you and for me.

Timothy was to apply himself to the Scriptures, he was to be furnished out of them. Any exhortation not founded on Scripture would not have much place. In the early days it was the Old Testament Scriptures that were opened out, and that is what is in view here. There must have been great need for the opening out of the Scriptures for the Jew who was well versed in the Old Testament, but needed to see the bearing of it in christianity. I think we have very little idea of what is in Scripture. There is an answer to every question and a solution to every difficulty; there is nothing that can arise that will not find its answer in Scripture. There is divine light to be had on every circumstance that may arise, and in all the exercises in relation to christianity. When our hearts are exercised, we get a thought by the Spirit, and then we go to Scripture to get it confirmed and put into shape. There is little real study of the Scriptures amongst us, and saints are lamentably ignorant of their

Bibles. We should seek to get the mind of God in reading, to get acquainted with Him, not merely to get comfort for ourselves. Many read a chapter daily as a duty without meditation or gain; the two go together.

Some distinct act of the Spirit had pointed out Timothy as a special vessel (verse 14). In 2 Timothy 1: 6 the gift was actually received by the laying on of the apostle's hands. I think Timothy's gift was administrative; it was in connection with his position as being a delegate from the apostle. Timothy was marked out by prophetic utterance to receive a gift, and Paul confers the gift; the elders come in and identify themselves with the gift. We see the principle of it in the present day — a man may say of a boy, 'That boy will be a great blessing in the church', and will pray for the boy.

We are not told where the prophecy about Timothy took place, but gift was bestowed by apostolic agency. The Lord need not identify His servants with what He is doing, He can do anything, but it pleases Him to associate His servants with what He is doing. It is not like Him to work alone and He brings Paul into the secret of His mind. There were certain things about Timothy that Paul or someone had prophesied; Paul put his hands upon him and the gift came into him, it was not there before.

1 TIMOTHY 5

1 Timothy 5

CAC It is important to keep in mind what we have been looking at, that it is a question of things being manifested in flesh. These things are in an actual company of men and women in this world, that all that is suited to God may come out. It is really a condition of things that has been perfectly expressed in Christ, and all those instructions and exhortations are not just points of church order, but they show us in a most interesting way how the life of God expresses itself in flesh.

Rem The word is, "Rebuke not an elder *sharply*" — it does not say he was not to be rebuked at all.

CAC There is that which is comely about it all. If Timothy had occasion to rebuke an elder, he was to remember that it would not be suitable to address him sharply; he was to exhort him as a father: there was to be grace about it all, and affection. It is so beautiful. That all did not rule well is very evident, because those who did were worthy of double honour; but there were some who did not and they might need to be rebuked, but not sharply. Timothy had to remember his relative place.

Rem The elders had a great place in the early days.

CAC They still have; the order of God's house does not change. It is how piety comes out. It would be very unbecoming to speak sharply to a man old enough to be one's father. If one has to exhort him it must be as a father.

Rem Paul had to rebuke Peter.

CAC Yes, but that was of a very exceptional character, and I have often said it cost Paul more to do it than it did Peter to receive it.

Ques Titus is exhorted to rebuke the Cretans sharply, is he not?

CAC Yes, "the Cretans are always liars". They were a people just come out of idolatry and they carried the savour of it with them. Dr. Glenny told me that, in the case of a certain race, they would be converted and come into fellowship, but nothing would stop their stealing and lying; the only thing was to rebuke them sharply. They had become so accustomed to that manner of life that it had become natural to them, like their very breath; they had no idea of wrong-doing, and it was necessary to bring it home to them by a sharp rebuke.

Ques What is the bearing of verse 4?

CAC The care of one's kindred is very acceptable in God's sight. It is a mark of piety. Piety has practically disappeared in the religious world, and it is very important that it should have its place with us. There is a danger that what obtains in the world creeps in amongst us in a subtle way.

Rem Children are to honour their parents.

CAC Yes, it is equally true for today. What can be worse than for a christian not to care for his own family?

Rem Some allow their relatives to accept the old age pension and think they have no further claim on them.

CAC I do not envy the state of mind of any saint who thinks that an old age pension relieves him of responsibility. In the Lord's time people invented religious excuses, but the Lord did not commend it. The children are to remember how much they owe to their parents, and to be looking out to see how they can render a return on their side; it is all very beautiful. It is touching to see the Lord's own care for His mother; almost at His last moments He thought of her and committed her into the hands of the disciple whom He loved. It is all exemplified in Him. In seeing all these things it is really studying Christ.

Ques What is your thought of being "a widow indeed"?

CAC I think "a widow indeed" was one who had no means of supply at all, no human support, no one but God. She is described in verse 5, "left alone", that is "a widow indeed". The widow indeed is the one to whom God has pledged Himself in a particular way. He is the judge of the widows.

Ques What is to be the character of the visit to the widow?

CAC I think it is the effect of the visit, not so much what you say or do. You do not go when things are happy; you look out for those who have need; you do not go to have a good time. This is piety. The widow's side is that she trusts in God. One or two widows like that amongst us would be a great power. Any help that the saints could render in temporal things would be as nothing compared to the help she rendered to the saints — "she continueth in supplications night and day".

Rem It does not say that she prays only about herself.

CAC I hope not. As to herself, she has put her trust in God. She does not continue day and night in prayer and supplications for herself when her hope is in God, her supplications are for others. Anna is a very good example "she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night

and day". What a lovely exhibition of piety can come out in a widow! A widow might say, All my life has gone, but it is the very best time of her life — life here with no support but with her hope and trust in God. What an honour! What a dignity! She adorns the doctrine of God in such a way that the elect angels like to see it. It is a true picture of the assembly, a widow indeed, one bereaved of Christ.

Rem What a contrast to what is spoken of in Revelation concerning Babylon — "she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow"!

Ques In verse 9 a widow is not to be put on the list under sixty years. Would there be no case in which a younger widow would be accepted?

CAC I think a younger widow is supposed to do something for herself. A young sister left with a family of children is a different thing. There is great wisdom in all this, that a widow should not receive regular administration from saints until she is sixty. Clearly there was a list of persons regularly cared for. If a widow was not on the list, surely no one else ought to be. If there are those who have to be cared for, it should be done systematically; it is God's way. Order is much better than indiscriminate charity.

Rem Some say a stated sum has a danger of causing a saint to lose dependence on God.

CAC The exercise on the part of those who receive would be as to whether they were worthy to receive it. Verse 10 is a challenge. Everything was to be taken into account. The saints would not be very happy to care for people where moral qualifications were lacking. If we came across such a widow as verse 10 describes, we should be very happy to put her on the list when she was sixty years old. She is one who has put her trust in God, not in brethren; she has given her confidence to God and has shown what she has thought of her brethren. There should be exercise with us; the way things are put in Scripture should produce exercise. We cannot improve on the way the Spirit puts things. An idle person, or one who has children or relatives, is not contemplated as to being supported in this way. It is a person who has been diligent in every good work. With young widows there is a danger of their becoming idle, and it suggests that they should work to support themselves. We must have regard to the past manner of life, and it should exercise the person helped and be a great exercise to us also to see that the person is worthy.

Ques What does verse 12 mean?

CAC It supposes that Christ has been sufficient for them; they had lost the one they had leaned on and found Christ sufficient, but turned away from Him

to nature. That is what the Spirit of God has in view clearly. It is a serious thing to come down spiritually; that is what should exercise one in a verse like this — to have found Christ sufficient and to turn from Him to what is the best thing in nature. It is not the point that they are not to marry — they are told to do so — but it is the state of mind and heart that the apostle is concerned about. There is never to be any allowance of that which would take one off the line of faith and dependence on God. It supposes that they had found in Christ an object for their hearts when they had lost all earthly support. "Cast off" is a strong word, but they were in danger of it as the result of a bad state of soul. One has to consider only the will of God. There was great danger in departing from ground already taken. Verse 15 is strong language but there *was* need for it and there *is*. We ought to consider these things very gravely. If we give up confidence in God and give up Christ as an object for the heart it is very serious. What may be very bad under the eye of God may not appear so with man.

If saints come under reproach from the world rightly it is uncomely and out of place, and no kind of excuse can be made for it. All is going to be made manifest; we get that at the end of the chapter. Some things come out beforehand and some after. Everything will be uncovered sooner or later. We ought to remember the angels; that would test us, it would help us, to think that the angels are looking on. It would check a lot of gossip. We should be exercised about these things. Soon after I was converted, an evangelist came to the town and I asked a servant of the Lord to come and hear him. He replied, 'I should not like to stumble anyone, and particularly not the angels'. It was a very wise remark. We ought to bear in mind that the elect angels are looking on. It would at times alter our behaviour if we remembered that they see when no one else does.

Ques The woman is to be covered? (1 Corinthians 11).

CAC The woman is always to be covered when praying. She would be so even if quite alone; it is the divine order. In the same way a man would not pray, even if alone, with his hat on.

1 TIMOTHY 6

1 Timothy 6

CAC It is striking in christianity how the highest things and the lowest are brought together — the conduct of the slave, and the name of God.

Ques Has the character of God to be defended in the bearing of saints in this world?

CAC It would appear so. It gives the saint a motive apart from any personal one. What the slave is thinking about is the name of God and the teaching.

Ques Might it refer to an unbelieving master?

CAC It seems to be an unbelieving master in the first verse, as it is a believing master in the second. You do not need to wait for a perfect state. Slavery is not a very happy condition, but you have not to wait for a change of circumstances. God changes us, not our circumstances. What a triumph for God — bringing out in a man everything that is a perfect contrast to all that he is naturally. The great principle with God is that He is working for His name's sake. God's motive comes out on the part of Israel. There is a remarkable chapter (Ezekiel 20) which reviews the history of the people in the past and the future — how God wrought for His name's sake. God would put Himself in a true light before His creatures. Instead of being blasphemed and spoken evil of,

He is spoken of according to truth. It supposes that the slave had come under the name of God Himself and the teaching.

Ques Is it incumbent on saints to defend the character of the blessed God where it has been slandered?

CAC Yes, it is a world where the slander has been at work for thousands of years. God's name has been blasphemed, but God is answering all in a practical way; He gives an answer to it in the lives of His saints. His saints are the vindication of Himself. He was fully vindicated in Christ, but that same character of things has to be maintained in the saints. It is all connected with the fact that God is here dwelling in His house. That house is composed of His saints, and there it is that God's name is, and the teaching. God's name is the great power, and the teaching is the moral effect of that. There is a certain moral effect from God being known. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ bring out the sound character of the man who has come under the influence of God's name. There is a soundness connected with it. Even the servant in

speaking of the prodigal son could say, "thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound". He could talk about that!

Rem I suppose verse 2 is a warning to believing servants, not to think they are on equal terms because they have believing masters.

CAC I should think so. There is a further incentive to faithful service, love to your brother. You serve him because he is "faithful and beloved", that comes out very clearly.

I was wondering whether there was not a special reference when the apostle alludes to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ (verse 3). I think what came out in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ is a wonderful setting forth of what is according to God's pleasure in man, not only the revelation of God, but in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ we get what marks a pious man — subjection and obedience; everything that was comely in a man was expressed in our Lord Jesus Christ. It covers everything. The thing is, do we fall in with it or not? A lawless man finds it impossible. There is power in the name of God to subdue. Grace is the power to subdue. God comes out in all the blessed power of His grace, and it subdues — nothing else does. So you come out here in the dignity of a giver, in the desire to enrich man in the light of the blessed God. It is a place of great dignity.

Ques Was Timothy exhorted to teach the practice of those things?

CAC It would appear that the practical side of things was more prominent than it is today. People seem to be afraid of the practical side in case legality should come in; but Timothy was exhorted to teach slaves in a very practical way.

Ques How do you distinguish between exhortation and teaching?

CAC Teaching is rather showing clearly what the mind of God is, while exhortation is more stimulating, encouraging people to go that way. "This is the way, walk ye in it". Exhortation is always necessary. There is a certain amount of inertia to be overcome, and exhortation comes in and applies a stimulant. We all need exhortation. I feel I do. All this is very much in relation to what you are grasping after. Men of the world grasp after gain. Piety *is* gain.

Rem You are to lay hold of eternal life. What a contrast to the things of this world!

CAC Yes, indeed. There is no exhortation to slaves to better themselves in this world.

Ques Would piety involve a grateful recognition of God's mercies?

CAC Yes, I think that is a very important part of piety. Piety maintains all that is due to God in the circumstances in which we are found. The Lord would not take Himself out of God's hands even when hungry. That is piety. Piety with contentment is great gain. Confidence that God is doing His very best for me and that He is set for my good will minister very much to contentment. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" — that is contentment. The Lord Jesus was perfectly contented. He was the most contented Man in this world. When in need of one He said, "Shew me a penny". I do not know that He ever had it in His hand.

Rem Paul had to learn contentment.

CAC Yes, and having nothing. It is a wonderful thing to have God, and that is how it comes true "as having nothing, and possessing all things", 2 Corinthians 6: 10. In the second book of Psalms we get a people disinherited, who had lost all things, but they had God — God was their inheritance; and the people who have God have a great deal. But what a little one really thinks of God! An old woman said, 'I have no resource but the Almighty', as if she were very badly off! The man who has the consciousness that God is for him and with him, is really a wealthy man.

Rem There is great grace in this consideration for the rich (verse 17); they are to be warned. The poor are really the best off.

CAC I believe that is true. It has often been said that Paul had to learn both conditions, how to be full, and how to be hungry, but to learn how to be full was the more difficult. The rich man has every reason to put his trust in what he possesses. It is a danger to which there is every tendency. J.B.S. used to say that the poor man who trusts in God is much better off than the rich one. It is not to be desired to stand high in this world. J.N.D. said that the only advantage of having a position socially was that you had the privilege of giving it up for Christ. Being rich is all right, it is God's way to convert rich as well as poor people, but to *desire* to be rich is another thing, it is a danger that comes from beneath. The Lord's words to the rich young man were, "sell all that thou hast ... and come, follow me". Paul could say, "for whom I have suffered the loss of all things", Philippians 3: 8. Paul had to learn contentment; it did not come spontaneously; he learned it. One would suppose that the loss of all things occurred at the outset, at the start of his christian course; we are not told any more, it is all summed up in these few words. In some way or other Paul lost all things for Christ.

Contentment is such a wonderful thing; there is hardly anything more effective in testimony amongst the saints. Just content, not aspiring to leave one's children better off, but content as to one's position in life. It is a wonderful

word "let us be ... content" — that is being on christian lines. People talk these days of living the simple life. That is a simple life if you like! I think it supposes that another order of things is in view. Saints do not grasp after things in the world, but they lay hold on eternal life.

Rem It is not money that is dangerous but the love of it. We need to be watchful. We see a terrible example in Judas.

CAC It just shows what a terrible leverage Satan has over the heart of man by the love of money. There was a brother who gave up his work in order to take another situation where he got an increase of two shillings a week, but in so doing he lost all the meetings. Our brother Mr. George Cutting said to him, 'I would like you to think over the bargain that you have struck. You have sold your spiritual advantages to the devil for two shillings a week'. The currency of the realm to which we belong is "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (verse 11), and those are the things we are to pursue and to enrich ourselves in. It is all right to be rich and these are the true coins of the realm!

Rem Even the rich in this world have privileges.

CAC Yes, indeed, they are to be "rich in good works"! (verse 18). The title of *man of God* is a most honourable one, it means a man who carries the savour of God about him. The title only occurs a few times in Scripture.

Ques Would you say there is a thought of maturity in the title? In John we read of sheep, then children of God, and later of men.

CAC It is men who are to be left, they are to stand shoulder to shoulder, that is the true military position. It is to faithful men that the testimony is to be committed. When the word 'men' is used, it is emphatic and suggests maturity. There is a moral order in all these things. Righteousness comes first and is connected with that which is due to God — carrying out His will. Then piety brings God into everything, then faith in God — one is built up of God, then love is in exercise. The last two qualities come in in connection with what you meet in your path; we endure, not in a bad spirit but in meekness of spirit. It is most important that the spirit should be preserved in a right attitude.

Rem Paul exercised himself to secure successors to maintain the testimony.

CAC Yes, and it has been maintained. There is no doubt that the Lord has maintained things. There have been those under the eye of God whose conduct has been on this line. It does not take a great crowd of people to maintain things for God. Things were never so blessedly maintained for God as

they were in one Man. There is clearly the thought of things being maintained here for God until the appearing, that is there is to be no surrender.

Ques What is the conflict of faith?

CAC It would be found in the pursuit of the things spoken of in verse 11. Some had wandered from the faith in pursuit of other things, and had pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Ques Why is the exhortation in verse 11 put in this form?

CAC I thought that was the kind of wealth the Christian is after in contrast to earthly gain. It is in contrast to the love of money. It is quite easy to see what a snare that is. We have a wealth of our own, and it is well to be rich in the true currency. It is moral wealth and cannot be obtained without conflict. It is not easy to follow after, it is so entirely contrary to the present system of things and there must be conflict in pursuit of it. People do not mind what they go through for a little gold — what a rush there always is to the gold diggings — but this is the kind of wealth to pursue. I think the deposit was what had been entrusted to Timothy in the way of gift. There had been certain things given to Timothy as a deposit; the Lord is the disposer of gift and Timothy had received from Him. He disposes as He will, it is a matter of sovereignty. He gives a special ministry to some and they have to see that those things are ministered whatever they may be. But there are things we have to acquire for ourselves. We have to pursue, to follow after, and it depends on ourselves. That is the side that is so important for us. We miss a great deal because we do not seek after these things, they are only to be got by pursuit. It is very much in the spiritual sphere as in the natural sphere. If people have an object they pursue it and obtain it if possible. In the world people know what they are after; there may be a thousand different things but a man knows what he wants; he knows what his object is, whether honour or wealth, or any kind of self-gratification. If Christians were only one-tenth part as earnest in the pursuit of things as the world is in the pursuit of their things, how we should get on! You do not come into conflict unless pursuing these things. If you do not want spiritual wealth the devil will let you alone and you will have an easy time; but the moment there is any movement Godward, every hindrance will be brought to bear against you in little things as well as big. If you desire to go to your room for a quiet time of prayer, it is astonishing the many things that will instantly crop up to prevent you; it just shows that there is a positive power working against all soul progress, and the point is are you going to surrender or fight on? People in the world talk about a fight to a finish, that is what *we* want.

Rem And it is not merely for self that we fight.

CAC That is why it is so blessed. What is gain for me is gain for all. Christianity is a commonwealth.

Rem I wonder why, after having commenced the letter as he did, the apostle comes down to what is extremely individual.

CAC It is all in relation to the former subject. Timothy is addressed as the man of God, and the man of God would be the proper kind of man for the house of God.

Rem Because evil influences had crept into the house of God, there was greater need for Timothy to stand firm.

CAC Yes, confession was to be made in spite of all the corrupting influences; there was to be no surrender until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, if the Spirit contemplated failure, He supplies the antidote in individuals.

Ques Who is going to stand in the breach? It is not a general thing.

CAC These moral features must mark those who stand for the truth. The point is to be that ourselves. The great thing here is confession; it is confessing publicly. Timothy had confessed in the most public way. The Lord had witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate.

Ques Did not Elijah stand alone?

CAC Elijah was prominent as a bold confessor, but there were seven thousand that he did not know of, and God was pleased to comfort the prophet by telling him about them, that He had others though they were out of sight. Elijah had come out as a bold confessor and it was a shame to the seven thousand not to have identified themselves with him. God let him into the secret, as it were, to comfort him, but it was to their shame not to have rallied round him, in a public way. Paul had to say, 'all have forsaken me', God maintained the testimony in Paul and Timothy, in individual persons. We should not be indifferent as to our part in the testimony. It pulls me up, it is exercising. Here it is eternal life that is spoken of; it is clearly the portion of all who believe and not limited on God's part, but one questions how far one has laid hold of eternal life. If Timothy had to be exhorted to do so, what about ourselves? Confession is connected with the kingdom, and it has to do with the rights of the Lord Jesus at a time when all do not recognise His rights. He confessed the truth of it before the gentile.

Ques That is very helpful. Confession then is really concerning Christ as King?

CAC Pontius Pilate represented the Roman power. As to government there are *powers that be*; well, we confess a *power that is to be*, and that is the whole

point. In verse 15 it speaks of "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords". It is a thing we are not sufficiently exercised about, to confess as King One who is not of this world, but who exists in truth and reality, but as to this world the power that is *to be* not that which *is*.

Ques What is the commandment?

CAC I think the commandment here is used in a general kind of way, it is a general term which would cover the will of God in practical application to us down here.

The confession is what you utter before many witnesses. Timothy was marked as having made a good confession, the Lord Jesus has been marked off as having made a good confession, and His servant, the man of God was characterised in the same way. All must be maintained spotless and irreproachable; if you confess and there is nothing to support it there is not much good in it.

Ques Would confession be looked at as coming early in the christian life, and keeping the commandment as a continuance of that?

CAC Yes, I suppose in a certain sense we have all confessed the rights of the Lord Jesus, that all the rights of the kingdom are vested in him. But having made a good confession it is most important that no spot or reproach should come upon it. The commandment is to be kept spotless. On that line we shall get into the region of eternal life, that is the kind of life for the kingdom.

2 TIMOTHY 1 (FIRST READING)

2 Timothy 1

CAC The testimony of our Lord is very much the same as the glad tidings, and it must always be in suffering and reproach. Paul in prison is a kind of pattern of the testimony.

Ques What is the difference between the testimony of the Lord and "the testimony of the Christ", 1 Corinthians 1: 6?

CAC It is here the thought of the Lord's power as being the support of the testimony, but in the testimony of the Christ it is God's anointed Man who is the subject of testimony. Then again the testimony of God is in contrast to everything that is of man. It is something introduced into this world which is purely of God. There was a danger that Timothy might be ashamed of it; that is why Paul exhorted him not to be. The Lord's power would be security for the maintenance of the testimony, but that power must be used by faith. It is not that the testimony will be all right whatever becomes of the saints! There is great strength in seeing it is the testimony of our Lord. It is very encouraging, and it is brought before us as a source of strength. There is no need to be ashamed if such a power is available. The exhortation is, "be strong in the Lord, and in the might of his strength". It is the might of the supreme One. Nothing but the sense of the Lord's support could sustain a man when his brethren had all forsaken him, but Paul had the inward consciousness that the Lord is the supreme One, and He is Master of the situation. The great point is to be exercised to be on the line on which we can get the Lord's support. It is the testimony the Lord supports, and to have His support we must be on that line. To know this would awaken exercise and desire to be in the condition in which we can have His support.

Ques How far does this apply to the servants of the Lord as distinguished from all saints?

CAC I thought it applied to saints viewed as soldiers. This is a militant epistle; the saint is viewed as a soldier. It goes very well with what is said in Joshua 5: 13 - 15, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come". It is characteristic of this epistle. Of course it applies specially to those prominent in service, just as an officer, if really a leader, gets most of the rough work. The apostle was the general of the army; but the very humblest are fighting; it is the Lord's host. Everyone is animated by the desire to do his bit. We hear in the world about each one doing his bit; our work is to see that we are really set to do our bit

for eternity, not for this world nor for time, but working it out in time. There are many exercises, many difficulties, and all is marked by opposition and difficulty; and there is a great tendency to droop and hang our heads, but we have to hold fast and not to droop. There must be no surrender. There is always a danger of giving up christianity according to God, and of dropping down to something according to man.

Rem This warfare is not a combat to enable one to hold one's head above water; it is for the elect's sake. Paul's idea of glory is eternal glory.

CAC Quite so. It is all glad tidings; there is no part of the testimony but what is of the greatest good for man. The word of God was not bound even though Paul was cast into prison, for he had many conversions. The very fact that Paul was imprisoned was the means of furthering the glad tidings; his bonds were made manifest in all the palace as being in Christ; all turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.

Rem The highest measure of gospel light is the truth of the resurrection.

CAC That is the whole point, it is something entirely outside the course of this world. We have to keep in mind Jesus Christ raised from among the dead. When there is a tendency to droop, we must carry in our minds the great truth of Jesus Christ raised from the dead. It will keep us free from the whole system of this world. The glad tidings is connected with the manifestation of life and incorruptibility coming to light in that man Jesus Christ. Not only life, but a bodily condition has come into view in Christ raised from the dead, that of incorruptibility. If we were really in the light of christianity, we should be accounted by the world a set of perfect fools, and people would arrive at the sober conviction that we were not fit to be at large!

Rem We see a case in point in Paul; his judges arrived pretty much at that conclusion.

CAC Although christendom holds as a doctrine the truth of the resurrection of Christ, the moment things take a tangible shape in souls it puts them outside the religious world, and, if outside, the reproach is very great.

Rem Suffering is open to all, whoever they may be, if in the truth.

CAC Salvation involves deliverance from all the elements of evil that are in the world, and in this respect many things that pass for good, and which perhaps we may have thought good, are only evil in God's sight. If we are maintained in the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, it brings us into a region of things entirely outside all man's schemes and plans, and that is the only way to be holy. There is no holiness connected with man in the flesh. There is not an

atom of holiness to be found in the world, even if we search for it from pole to pole, but we are called with a *holy* calling.

Ques Is the calling a positive position following on a negative position? The Red Sea came first, salvation and deliverance; then the calling — a people were set apart for God in a peculiar way.

CAC I think so, according to His own purpose and grace given in Christ Jesus. That is the positive character of it, every saint is called. It should awake an exercise in the soul. The natural man may be taken up with the truth of purpose without any kind of divine exercise; that is Calvinism — what is to be will be. The purpose of God, if rightly viewed, produces exercise; it shows what God has before Him and we should be exercised to be on that line. Timothy and Paul were in the light and good of it; it was a substantial reality to them, so that they were prepared to be despised, and ill-treated, and shut up in prison. The apostles were not regarded as popes or archbishops in those days; they would seem to have been in disgrace even among christians. John has to say, I have given a letter of commendation but no notice has been taken of it.

Paul's was a service of great labour. He served in the light of the purpose of God and he was in the good of it in his own soul. He could say at the end of his course that he had not given up anything. He had held the position and the enemy had been defeated all along the line. In verse 16 he gives Onesiphorus the Distinguished Service Order!

Ques In Hebrews 8 and Philippians 1 the calling is spoken of differently. Why is it called here a holy calling?

CAC We reach a spot where there is no death. Christ has "annulled death and brought to light life and incorruptibility", and we are called to that according to His purpose and grace. It is all very wonderful. We have to come to it and as we are in the light of it we are on the life-line. It is life outside this world. We do well to ask ourselves what our life consists in, where is it? Is it our business, our family circle, or our hobbies? If we are honest we shall answer truly. Each one of us knows what we are most interested in, and what our hearts find joy in. God has opened up life and the great thing is that we should each be exercised to be on that line.

Ques Would this new position be God's thought for every man?

CAC Yes, it is for men, and so it is preached as the glad tidings. The elect obtain it, but it is God's thought for every one. It is Paul's gospel for the present moment. I think as we come into this order of things God finds pleasure in it.

Ques Would you say that in giving out the gospel one can present the truth that God is pleased to bring men into the same position that the Son is in at present?

CAC It is a stupendous thing, but when you begin to talk on that line you will find great difficulty in sustaining the attention of your congregation!

Rem Every one has his own little bit. I suppose Paul was a herald, apostle and teacher.

CAC Paul was a herald; he stood in the market place, and proclaimed the gospel, and when that was heard he was recognised as an apostle; he became a teacher. A teacher is one who gives instruction in detail.

Ques Would the epistle to the Romans be the gospel to the saints?

CAC Yes, but not exactly the herald side; it is Paul teaching the gospel, and all that Paul teaches, if taken up in a right way, is sufficient. Paul is in prison and in that way is a pattern man, and the nearer we get to his position the better for us. Brethren get accredited by the world sometimes. We are in great danger if the world begins to pat us on the back. We need to be on our guard. There are certain things to be done in the world, but when the world approves, it is to be feared.

Rem The godly man is always in reproach.

CAC Yes, the character of the moment is reproach.

2 TIMOTHY 1 (SECOND READING)

2 Timothy 1

CAC We were speaking last week of what Paul calls the testimony of our Lord. I think he dignifies the glad tidings by speaking of it in that way. We were seeing that it concerns the purpose and grace of God given to the saints in Christ Jesus before the ages of time, so that God has brought in, in His grace, life and incorruptibility. There is a living character of things introduced that cannot be corrupted, and Paul brings this before Timothy as encouragement in view of the corruption of everything in the christian profession.

Life and incorruptibility were ever in God's purpose, but were manifested by the appearing of Jesus Christ and His annulling death. Now the important thing is that what was in the purpose of God in Christ Jesus before the world was should be livingly in the saints by the Holy Spirit. That is really Paul's glad tidings and its results. The glad tidings are to this end, that what was in the purpose of God in Christ Jesus before the world was should now be vitally in the saints by the Holy Spirit.

In verse 13 Timothy is enjoined to have an outline of sound words which he had heard of Paul in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Now you have faith and love, that is, in the soul of Timothy. It is not held theologically, but vitally.

Ques What is the meaning of "in Christ Jesus"?

CAC My impression is that the term "in Christ Jesus" covers the whole of Paul's gospel. To apprehend intelligently what is meant by "in Christ Jesus" would separate us from the whole disordered state of things in christendom.

In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks of "in Christ Jesus"; he speaks entirely from the side of the divine calling and purpose. I do not think that the saints at Corinth had touched it because they were carnal and walking as men. How could carnal people touch what was in Christ Jesus? Paul was trying to show them that what was in Christ Jesus had touched them. It had touched *them* if they had not touched *it*. That is, they were sanctified in Christ Jesus; it was a question of how God had been moving to them. "Of him are *ye* in Christ Jesus, who had been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption". Paul's object in bringing this in is to shut the flesh out altogether — that no flesh should glory in His presence.

Paul speaks of the testimony of Christ in chapter 1, and the testimony of God in chapter 2 (1 Corinthians). The testimony of Christ was as much as to say that the candlestick was there and all its vessels, but the oil had not been

furnished for the light and the lamps were burning dim. The testimony of the Christ was there established in the saints and not anywhere else, but they needed to be spiritual in order to preserve the light to the testimony; it needed spiritual persons. We can look at the thought of "in Christ Jesus" first from the side of divine purpose; there could be nothing defective or enfeebled on that side because it was given to the saints before the world began, and nothing that has happened in the history of the world or the history of individual believers could invalidate it.

"In Christ Jesus" suggests to me that God has another Man before Him, and that in the sovereignty of His mercy, grace and power He has transferred the saints to that Man. He has transferred us vitally to Christ risen by giving us the Spirit. The blessing of Abraham has come to the gentiles in Christ Jesus that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith; Galatians 3: 14. "In Christ Jesus" is connected with the presence of the Spirit in the saints. I cannot think of anything likely to be more establishing than that saints should consider Paul's use of the term "in Christ Jesus"; it is a great stay for the heart.

Ques Does not Paul open up the truth of *in Christ*?

CAC Yes, but in Christ seems to me wider in its scope than the church. All the families that are blessed are blessed in Christ "As in Adam all die, thus also in the Christ shall all be made alive". It is a wider scope and it applies to every resurrection family, but I do not know that "in Christ Jesus" is said of any family but the church. I think it is limited to Paul's teaching, it is characteristic of his teaching. The words which Timothy had heard of Paul were concerning Christ Jesus, and he was to have them definitely before him; he was to have the outline of what he had heard of Paul. I have noticed how definite people are who have wrong notions. If a person has wrong notions he is precise and clear and knows exactly the scripture he relies on to support it, and that is why christians are so often at the mercy of designing persons. Now we have to be careful that we have an outline, that we know clearly where we are, and what man we are connected with. I think Paul's gospel is the gospel that applies particularly to this present time. It is the testimony to be rendered, and it is in our times. It has a limited period and we are in that period. "In Christ" covers the whole ways of God in grace with men. I think Adam himself was "in Christ" but not "in Christ Jesus".

I think that "in Christ Jesus" stands in relation to what is outside time, to what lies in the purpose of God outside time; but it is being effectuated today, so there is faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Speaking generally, faith is connected with divine Persons, and love has its activity towards the brethren.

It is remarkable the way that Paul presents the truth of "in Christ Jesus" to young converts; it is good to get an elementary thought of it. I believe the first mention historically of "in Christ Jesus", is in 1 Thessalonians, the earliest epistle written. Paul says in chapter 5: 16, 17, "Rejoice always; pray unceasingly; in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus towards you". That is the way that we are started on the line of "in Christ Jesus". We get the thought of a company of persons in this world marked by joy, by continual prayer, and by giving thanks in all things — that is God's will in Christ Jesus. We see the new order of man. That is how Paul brings it out to people who have only been converted a few weeks — God's will in Christ Jesus. We are to begin to move on that line. What a comprehensive thing it is to be characterised by always rejoicing; nothing is more uncommon in this world than a person who is always rejoicing. We are bound to see something special in that. Then there is "pray unceasingly" — that is, persons whose very life-breath is a prayer, it is the very breath of the soul. And "in everything giving thanks"; no murmuring or discontent or complaining of the weather or circumstances or anything else, but thanksgiving. That is the elementary presentation of being "in Christ Jesus"; it is the will of God in Christ Jesus. It has helped me much to see this; it gives one a good practical start of being in Christ Jesus. Paul speaks of assemblies in Judaea being in Christ Jesus, and the fact that they were had brought down on them persecution. People moving on this line will be persecuted, for the world does not like the presence of people who rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. It is a condemnation of the world and every one in it. These Thessalonian believers did not know a tenth part of what the youngest person in this room who is breaking bread knows today. Paul was leading them to it in a very simple way, telling them this was the line they were to be on now — rejoicing always, praying unceasingly, and in everything giving thanks. Thus we move on the line of the will of God in Christ Jesus. Paul brings the Thessalonians to it experimentally, not doctrinally. Paul opens the subject out very carefully in Romans, and shows how God disentangles us from what is connected with us as in the flesh. When God took hold of us we were bound up in liabilities connected with the flesh and Adam, and we could not shake ourselves free, but God has come in to disentangle us. Paul shows that we get liberated from the question of sins, from the state of sin, and from the law, and then in chapter 8 we come to be in Christ Jesus. It is the complete disentanglement from every question that has arisen from our responsible history in flesh. Every question is solved, and now we are in Christ Jesus and have the Spirit — that is Paul's gospel.

Rem The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free.

CAC That is when we get it vitally in our souls. Paul says to the Galatians, "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision has any force, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love". When all in Asia turned away from Paul, it was not only the truth of the assembly they turned away from, but the truth of the glad tidings as personified in Paul — that is, all connected with the precious title "Christ Jesus", and the precious term "in Christ Jesus". We should set the greatest value on those words.

The presentation of this truth must have been very testing, for under the influence of these two leading brethren Paul mentions (verse 15) they turned away from him. We can easily be ashamed of the testimony, so Timothy is exhorted not to be ashamed of it; it is a test to every one of us, whether we are moving on the line of "in Christ Jesus". Am I always rejoicing? Praying without ceasing? Giving thanks in all things? That is the line of the testimony.

In verse 14 Paul says, "Keep, by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted". I think the good deposit was the truth which was in Christ Jesus; it is a priceless jewel and Timothy was the custodian of it. We cannot keep it by natural power or by putting it in a creed; Timothy had to keep it by the Spirit. What has led to everything that is wrong in christendom is that they relied from early days in the history of the church on a creed for the preservation of the truth, and not on the Spirit. Creeds are not vital, they are not sufficient to preserve things. I often think that the man who had a talent and wrapped it away in his napkin was putting it in a creed, and so it was unproductive and yielded nothing for the Lord. We want things, not in our creeds but in our lives. They are to be vitally in the saints.

Rem The woman in the gospel who had an issue of blood, got virtue out of Christ.

CAC Yes, a person always rejoicing and breathing an atmosphere of prayer and never complaining even when things are adverse, that person could say, I have touched the hem of His garment and I have virtue out of Christ. We are very much nearer to Him than that woman was when she touched the hem of His garment. We are in personal contact with Him every moment by having His Spirit, and we need to wake up to the realisation of it. We all know very well that, when we are in personal contact consciously with the Lord, we do not fail or dishonour Him by any defection or wrong conduct; it is when we get away that the soul soon gets clouded. We are open to exposure ourselves then, for Satan, apart from the mercy of God, can do what he likes with us. You find that christians away from the Lord behave worse than people in the world. The reason is that Satan has a special object in getting them to behave

badly. He does not trouble about people in the world, but he lays himself out to get christians to do things which bring reproach on the name of Christ.

It is through the gospel that we learn first that all God's thoughts of blessing towards us are in Christ Jesus, and that by the call of God we are in Christ Jesus. We all attach through God's grace great importance to the truth of separation from iniquity as laid down in chapter 2, but on what principle are we going to be separate, and what is the grace and power to enable us to do it? I think it is the apprehension of what is in Christ Jesus. This light comes to us in the gospel, but it does not commend itself to the mind of man. It is a stumbling-block to the Jew, the religious man, and foolishness to the Greek, the intellectual man, but to those who are called it is Christ the wisdom and power of God. A called person has retired from the religious man and the intellectual man, has discarded the whole as worthless; that is the moral separation that cuts down to the root of everything.

Onesiphorus was wholly governed by what was of God; he discerned that Paul was the vessel of the testimony at the moment, but it seems to show that things were not right with the brethren in Rome, for they did not know where Paul was. It says, he "sought me out very diligently, and found me". Paul was in Rome and there was a large company there, but they seem not to have known where to find him; so when Onesiphorus came up from the provinces with great desire to find Paul he had to be very diligent in searching for him. That was true brotherly love, and he was not ashamed of the chain. Could we be singled out as moving on altogether different lines from the bulk of christians and moving in such a way as to refresh the Lord Himself? Paul was representative of the Lord Himself. Paul is our apostle, in a special way to us gentiles, and he is the man with the pitcher of water for us. It is a good thing to follow Paul and sail with him; he connects us with a source of supply and satisfaction that cannot be touched by any circumstances of the christian profession.

The first epistle to Timothy gives us the gospel in its bearing on the condition of man; it speaks of the Saviour God who will have all men to be saved, and of the Mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus who gave Himself a ransom for all. The first epistle presents the gospel in relation to the need of man, and the second epistle presents the gospel in relation to the purpose of God. We do not give up the first epistle by going on to the second. What we learnt in the first is still true but now we are looking at the second volume of the gospel. The assembly is the third volume, and that makes up the threefold cord. The gospel is what there is for men in the grace and love of God, but the assembly is what is secured for God and Christ.

In the first epistle we see that all the elements of departure were there; law-teaching, giving up of piety, and giving up of all divine order; but in the second epistle these things have become characteristic of the whole profession. We are therefore glad to move off on to the line of faith and love in Christ Jesus and to keep things by the Holy Spirit. I cannot keep things by doctrine, but I must keep them by the Spirit. We have seen people who have known the New Testament truth as well and better than we do, and yet they have turned aside from the testimony because they did not keep things by the Holy Spirit.

It is interesting that Paul asks for present mercy for the house of Onesiphorus, but as to Onesiphorus himself, "The Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord in that day". That is the day when everything comes to light; we should not naturally have thought of mercy in that day. It indicates that in regard of what is connected with responsibility the thought of mercy goes right through to the judgment-seat of Christ. I think when we get there we shall feel in our souls that whatever the Lord commends and approves, or any crown of righteousness He gives, is all mercy. Paul said, "having received mercy of the Lord to be faithful". If any of us are a little more faithful than our brethren it is mercy.

> 'How shall I meet those eyes?
> Mine on Himself I'll cast,
> And own myself the Saviour's prize,
> Mercy from first to last'.

That is how I shall stand at the judgment-seat of Christ. Possibly Onesiphorus was no longer here, his pathway of testimony was over, and so Paul's desire for mercy in the present is for his house, but as to Onesiphorus himself, he looks for mercy in that day. We shall have to come back at the judgment-seat of Christ, if never before, to the thought of pure mercy.

2 TIMOTHY 2 (FIRST READING)

2 Timothy 2

Ques What is the thought of Onesiphorus finding mercy?

CAC If a man is faithful in his course down here it is a matter of mercy, and all reward will be on the ground of mercy in that day when God takes account of the service of His saints.

Rem I had regarded Onesiphorus as having by his act identified himself with Paul in the reproach of the testimony.

CAC Yes, and there was a sure compensation for him in that day. Everything will be gathered up in that day. The apostle had said just before, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day". Our vindication belongs to that day.

Rem The great thing is to leave it to that day.

CAC Saints had been turning away from Paul, forgetting all that they had got from him, and were actually speaking ill of him, but Paul committed his cause to the Lord.

Rem He was in no way soured by it.

CAC No. I suppose we do not know the One whom we have believed if we get soured. If "that day" were always in view it would give great solidity to things; there would be no dropping out because of discouragement; if we "faint in the day of adversity" our strength is small.

Ques What is the force of being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus?

CAC There is no limit to the supply. It becomes of great importance in a day of departure that we should be on the life-line; that is, that things should be vital. The grace that is in Christ Jesus is very vital. I take it that it is a new order. He says in chapter 1: 13, "Hold fast the form of sound words ... in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus". That is the line of life; everything that is really life is in Christ.

Rem Faith and love are inseparable.

CAC It was what marked believers when they were really in life that they had faith in Christ Jesus and love to all saints, and the thing is to be of the order of those who are strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. God has brought in His anointed Man. He has not only brought Him into heaven as His anointed

Man, but He has brought Christ Jesus in on the earth in His saints. It is faith and love in Christ Jesus, and saints are in Christ Jesus. God has brought Him here morally. It is vital to christianity that there is a people living piously in Christ Jesus, actually down here on this earth. People are more taken up with the things that are in Christ Jesus on the line of purpose and have lost sight of it on the moral side. God has actually brought in that order of Man in Christ Jesus. Paul says, In Christ Jesus I have begotten you. When born we are not very big, but that is the line we are on, and it is a great thing to grow in it, and to be strong in all the qualities that mark God's anointed Man. The idea of being strong suggests that you become a man; Timothy is addressed as a man, "thou, O man of God". Do not let us be content to be babes; we have to grow up morally. It is a perfect contrast to what Adam was as fallen man. It is brought about in the very place where Adam failed; in a world that is full of the qualities of the fallen creature God has brought in all the qualities of His anointed Man, and saints share the qualities and the Spirit of the anointed Man, the Christ. Faith and love are to mark saints down here.

We could not be established in grace and yet desire to maintain any status as men in the flesh — the only order we have to maintain is that of men in Christ Jesus. As we are sitting here, it is all very well, but alas! in our responsible life we often practically lose sight of it and get into a very mixed condition morally. It ought not to be so; there ought only to be the condition that is of Christ; it should not be mixed — partly Christ and partly Adam — such a thing was never God's thought. Everything came out in Christ; all has been seen in a Man in this world. It has been seen of angels.

Rem And we receive the Spirit of that Man.

CAC God's thought of bringing a Man into this world is an immense thing. You have to go through travail of soul to reach it; it is not easy, but through exercise and travail that new order of man is brought in. Paul said he travailed in birth for the Galatians that Christ might be formed in them. He went through great exercise of soul for them. God was bringing in Christ and they had gone back to Adam. If it had been possible for the flesh to have been formed according to God, the law would have done it, but the material was so bad that God had to set it all aside to form Christ and to bring Christ into this world. We ought all to see that nothing will do for God but the life-line.

Ques We only reach it through travail of soul, you say?

CAC It cannot be reached in any other way. Ishmael had to be cast out; it was very grievous in the sight of Abraham. It was like casting out his own bowels. That which he had cast out was the thing nearest to his heart; and so it is with us, the thing nearest to self, our very being morally, has to go that

something new may be brought in — the anointed Man *down here*. We have connected the anointed Man too much with heaven.

Ques Will you define the state reached which the apostle has before him, Christ formed in you?

CAC I think it is the kind of man. In the Galatians it was very obvious that Christ was not formed in them. A people occupied with days, weeks, months and years, circumcision and uncircumcision, is not formed after Christ. It is not normal that converted people should take up and occupy themselves with these things. The apostle is labouring to bring them to recognise an enduring order of things where "neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision; but new creation". That is salvation. Nothing is of any good that does not work by faith and love. Faith works by love and that is quite a different thing. A new kind of man is formed which is after Christ. Faith working by love *is* Christ formed in saints. Paul saw it worked out in the Colossians and in the Ephesians. It is what you can take account of, it is not a thing outside what you can take account of. Paul had heard of it in the Colossians; Epaphras had come and told him of them; Christ was being formed in them. Faith working by love is christianity; the Man was really being brought into the world. It is a great thing. It is God's intention to bring a Man into this world. It takes all the saints to make up that Man and that is in Christ Jesus. Christianity is a continuation of Christ in the saints and nothing else is. God's triumph is seen in the saints in Christ Jesus.

We are to be strong in the grace of the anointed Man, in all the moral beauty of that Man. We cannot limit grace in that blessed Man; He is the embodiment of all grace and the source of it for His saints. We begin very small, we get introduced to it by the gospel. Paul said, I have begotten you; he had really begotten them through exercise; they were the product of his exercise as well as his preaching. He did not go home and go to sleep; he went through travail of soul on their behalf. We often come into things through the exercise of another; someone perhaps has been praying for us. We first touch things through exercise, and it is only through exercise we enter into this new order of things, and then we have to grow.

Ques What helps us to grow?

CAC We need to have food. We desire the sincere milk of the word, as Peter says, that we may grow thereby. We grow through our own exercises. The apostle had done everything for his converts; he had mothered and fathered them. It would be very wonderful to have someone like that to look after our souls! Growth has largely to do with ministry and pastoral care in the assembly and constantly coming into contact with people desirous of helping us; and

then God's dealings with us in discipline and the many exercises that turn us to prayer; prayer is a very important part of growth. It is a very great thing to have the new order of things before the soul. God's thought is to have a new order of things in Christ Jesus. You touch the line of life, are alive unto God. It is not eternal life, but the life-line in contrast to all that is here morally. Food is very important. The point about food is that you become characterised by what you feed on; it is made part of your constitution. You do not merely eat for comfort and enjoyment but that you may be strengthened and built up; so with spiritual food, it is that we may be built up constitutionally, so that we are coloured by the very things we have been feeding on. We should not come to meetings merely to get cheered up because we are feeling depressed.

Rem An atmosphere of love would promote growth. Would you say a little more about the 'in Christ' condition?

CAC It is the one thing that will preserve us in a day of departure. When people turn away, the thing is to go on with what is 'in Christ Jesus'. It is an expression used a good many times. I think there is the thought of continuity. Things are to be kept. Faithful men are to be raised up to keep this line of things before saints; it is a great thing to keep these things before us. One is thankful to see faithful men raised up for this purpose. Very few really understand what it is to be in Christ Jesus. If you asked the saints in T., nine out of ten would not know what you meant; you would be amazed at the answers you would get. Souls get occupied with their blessings; they are justified in Christ, accepted in Christ and so on. It is all quite true, but does not bring in the moral truth of saints being livingly connected with Christ Jesus in this world. Objective truth alone does not produce exercise. Saints are often content with seeing all in Christ, but the moment you touch the truth of God's thought that the Man should be brought into the world, it produces exercise and travail of soul. It is God's intention to bring in Christ in me and in all my brethren. Paul laboured to present everyone perfect in Christ. He wants to bring *the* Man into the world. The truth is we are absolutely justified in another Man, but we cannot separate from this the subjective side of things. It is true we are justified in Christ. All believers are justified in the Man who sits at God's right hand, but we have made many scriptures run on that line that really do not. There are many scriptures on the moral line. It is the moral line that is to be worked out in saints. We are to be livingly in Christ Jesus down here, and people reach it through exercise. Romans 7 and Romans 8 are different. Romans 8: 1 is on the moral line, you become translated to the new line morally. In chapter 8 "in Christ Jesus" is outside the range of condemnation; there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. You are connected livingly with this new order of things. In Romans when you touch "no

condemnation", conscience does not condemn you. In chapter 7 you delight in God's will but could not do it; now you delight in it and do it. It is really the Spirit of life in another Man; you are free. It does not suppose that souls in the good of justification are not free from conditions of sin. If a soul is justified it touches new ground where there is no condemnation, in Christ Jesus, outside the region of sin and death. There is freedom of spirit. Paul states it first abstractly, that there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus, then maintains it as an absolute fact, "for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death". He had proved it; he speaks of it abstractly first, and then as one who was in the good of it. When we see what christianity is, we are profoundly self-judged; we are all so small and feeble in our apprehension of it. The first verse of chapter 8, "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus", follows on chapter 7, but he is in the good of it by walking according to Spirit; there is nothing else in Christ Jesus but what is of the Spirit. The righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled; this is the very lowest platform on which Scripture contemplates saints. It is the proper platform for every babe in Christ. Higher truth is found in Colossians and Ephesians.

2 TIMOTHY 2 (SECOND READING)

2 Timothy 2

CAC It is a great comfort in coming together, and at all times, to remember that it is the Lord who gives understanding. Paul says, "Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things". It is the pleasure of the Lord that we should have spiritual understanding, and the way to get it is to seek the Lord. It is written in the Old Testament that "they that seek the Lord understand all things", and, "I wisdom dwell with prudence". Divine wisdom is found with prudent souls. Solomon tells us to find the wisdom that cometh of reflection. We need to be marked by a spirit of prudence and reflection, and then wisdom will be found with us. This is so important in view of the confusion of the last days.

Ques Is that the same as the spirit of wisdom in Isaiah 11?

CAC That is a very fine scripture. All that will qualify Christ for universal government is requisite to qualify the saints of the assembly to act wisely and with understanding in the midst of such conditions that obtain today.

"Think of what I say" gives a special place to the one who was the vessel of the ministry of the assembly. We think of what Paul says. Reflection is needed, the power to consider divine things spiritually; otherwise the mind is occupied with what is of no value in relation to the divine system. There is a difference between wisdom and understanding. There is a system of blessed things, and if we are to act intelligently for God in relation to His system we need understanding in all things. It is all things connected with Christianity, so that we do not act by impulse or feeling, or our own personal view of things, but we act with spiritual understanding. It is most important in these last days that we should be marked by understanding. We see earnest people, who love the Lord, doing exceedingly foolish things, and imagining that they are serving God. That does not further the testimony of the Lord.

In the assembly the understanding or mind has a very great place because there is no edification if there is no understanding. If a person's thoughts are all mixed up the saints are not edified. The apostle preferred to speak five words with his understanding that he might edify others. Five words marked by spiritual understanding are worth ten thousand words without it. The spirit of enquiry in the temple is the great safeguard of the saints: if we cease to enquire in the temple we shall fail in the understanding of the mind of God. We may do much that is earnest, and in a sense devoted, but it does not help as to the mind of God. What marks Christendom generally is that it has ceased

to enquire in the temple; we have to see that we preserve the spirit of enquiry. We have to enquire in that beautiful spirit of Psalm 131; there is a spirit of readiness to refuse one's own thoughts. A weaned child has had to accept the exercise of being deprived of what was natural, and we have to go through that exercise. There must be a preparedness to be deprived of what we have clung to naturally — our own thoughts and judgment — and we have to find ourselves in relation to another system in which we have everything to learn.

One supremely important matter is brought before us in verse 8, "Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead, of the seed of David, according to my glad tidings". There is an immense amount in that. We might have thought, Why should he have had to say such a thing to Timothy? It is not remembering a fact, it is not remembering that He was raised (the Authorised Version of the Scriptures is a little misleading), but that he should remember Him raised. That is, we do not merely remember a fact, but we remember a Person in a certain condition. It is an important part of spiritual understanding to keep that Person in remembrance. All God's ways in the past, and the promises, are verified and substantiated now in that Person raised from among the dead. It is of supreme importance that we should remember Jesus Christ in resurrection conditions; we have to keep it ever in mind every day, not the fact that He is risen but that He is in resurrection conditions. That is the One we have to do with. This is the very root of deliverance from all that is of man in the religious profession today; it lies in remembering Jesus Christ raised from the dead. This moves the affections and spiritual understanding of the saints into a new region altogether. Man cannot take in resurrection. F.E.R. used to say that he was astonished at the religious world observing Easter; he could understand their observing Good Friday because the death of the Lord has come into the knowledge of man, but it was always a puzzle to him that they should celebrate Easter, because resurrection opens up a sphere which is entirely outside the range of man's thoughts and capacities. One could not link the risen Man with things here. The religious system has grown through forgetfulness of Jesus Christ raised from among the dead; that simple and blessed reality has been forgotten instead of being remembered. It is not the fact that has been forgotten; all professing Christians have it in their creeds that He rose the third day, they look on it as a matter of history; but Christ raised from among the dead does not belong to this world's history at all, it belongs to a region only known to faith. That is what made the breach between Paul and the Jews.

Festus summed it up when talking to Agrippa; he says, This is a matter between the Jews and Paul, about certain questions of their system of

worship, and "one Jesus, which was dead,

whom Paul affirmed to be alive". That is the whole question; it was concerning One Jesus who was dead — Festus could speak positively of that fact. But Paul affirms Him to be alive. If He is living, where is He living? In this world? That is the whole question. As to this world Jesus is dead; that is an historical fact. It needs faithful men to stand at the present time in the light of another world, and in the light of One who is raised from the dead. The Lord never touched the world after His resurrection; He was known in the circle of His own, and He was the subject of testimony, but He was outside the whole course of this world. Now where is He living? If every promise of God and every part of the blessing of God, and all that is precious in the sight of God is substantiated and verified in One who is raised from among the dead, does that not move the believer as to his faith and affections completely outside this present world? It delivers him from the whole effort of christendom to connect divine things with man as living in this world; it delivers at a single touch from the whole system of corrupt christianity. It is something to remember; "Remember Jesus Christ". If we are prepared as faithful men to stand by that, we shall find that it puts us in a very restricted place in this world.

Nothing but this will bring us to take up the ground of having died with Christ — that is the real secret of everything. Have we died with Christ? Paul speaks of it here with an 'if', and the 'ifs' of Scripture are things to be very carefully noted. It is seeing the greatness of the Person who is on the other side of death, and seeing the greatness of all that is substantiated in Him, that prepares the heart to take up this attitude of having died together with Him.

We get here the thought of God's elect. Paul affirms that Jesus is living — that is the public aspect of things, and that involves the whole system that is connected with Him as living. In maintaining that Paul incurred the anger of the religious men after the flesh; they persecuted him with relentless enmity; but he says, I am prepared to suffer and to endure because God has His elect, and His elect are going to obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. That is something outside the course of this world. All this is positive blessedness which will prepare us to be dead with Christ, and prepare us for separation. Paul is going to lay it down as a necessity that the path of separation should be taken; and if we are to take the path of separation we must have some substance in our souls, so he brings in all the spiritual assets.

Ques Is this the highest form of salvation?

CAC I think it is, because the salvation that is in Christ Jesus would involve ultimately having a body of glory like Christ. The salvation that is in Christ Jesus is very great because it involves a new place altogether; it involves

eternal glory, a new sphere, a new condition — the condition of the risen and glorified Man. My impression is that the term "in Christ Jesus" is not applied to any company of saints save the saints of the assembly. The thought of "in Christ" would probably include the Old Testament saints, too; for instance, "the dead in Christ shall rise first", and "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive". "In Christ" takes in the whole company, whatever family they belong to. I think every saint, from Abel down to the last saint there will be, can be said to be "in Christ". There is no blessing for man except in Christ, but this term "in Christ Jesus" is specially linked with Paul and his doctrine, and has to do with the saints of the assembly. I do not think there is any scripture that applies the term to other saints.

Ques How far does "in Christ Jesus" take us?

CAC I think it takes us into all that is in the purpose of God. It is in that risen and glorified Man in whom every thought of God is substantiated, the Man of purpose, so we are fully furnished without requiring a single element that the world could offer. When the heart sees that, it is prepared to die together with Christ. Dying together with Christ has an *if* attached to it. In Colossians it says, "If ye be dead with Christ ... why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" There is an *if* — you could not say that all christians had died together with Christ; they have not come to it, they have not put the stones in the Jordan.

Ques Have they not all been baptised?

CAC Yes, the children of Israel were baptised in the Red Sea, but they did not put the stones in the Jordan until forty years after.

Ques Where are we if we have not put the stones in Jordan?

CAC Living in the world. The Red Sea is the way out as to public profession, and in public profession every baptised person has gone out from the world; he is committed to the position publicly, but we have got to come to it affectionately.

None of us knew anything about baptism when we were baptised, we had to learn it afterwards. Paul in writing to the Romans does so on the ground that they had been baptised, and as having been baptised they had taken the ground of being dead to sin; they were on that ground publicly, and he reasons from that standpoint. But when we come to the stones being put into Jordan, that was not a command, Joshua was not told to put the stones in the Jordan; he did it by spiritual intuition. I think the *if* raises the question whether we have put our stones in Jordan. "If we have died together with him, we shall also live together; if we endure, we shall also reign together; *if* we deny,

he also will deny us; *if* we are unfaithful, he abides faithful, for he cannot deny himself". It is put that way; it is a question of *ifs*, and it is very good to remember it. This was a statement which the earlier saints were very familiar with, Paul could refer to it as a known word, "The word is faithful". This was doubtless an early Christian hymn, and it would not be amiss if we had it in our hymnbook; it shows the kind of hymns that the earlier Christians sang. Living together with Him is dependent on having died together with Him. It is right and of God that these questions should be raised. What are we doing? Are we living in the world, or have we died with Christ? There is a possibility of any of us not having died with Christ, and if we have not we are not living with Him — that is quite clear. If we endure, we shall reign; if we deny, He also will deny us. If we are unfaithful, well, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. We have to come back to Him for everything; if all fails we remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead. If we remember that and take account of it and all it involves — He does not live in this world — if I believe and love, am I going to live in the place where He is dead, as Festus said, or am I in my affections and mind going to take the place of having died with Him in view of living together with Him? All turns on that. Are we going to live where Christ died, or is it a necessity to us to die in order that we may live where He lives? Nothing can do us more good than to pay great attention to that word, "Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead", to let our mind dwell on that Person living. That is Paul's affirmation, He is living. If God's salvation and blessing and the revelation of God in love are all bound up in my heart with that Person, what is the effect? I am prepared to die together with Him in view of living with Him — that is simple Christianity.

Ques Jesus Christ covers all that came out in that Person for God in His whole life. Is that gathered up in the thought of resurrection?

CAC Yes, because nothing is lost; all that came out is substantiated in that Person. He is lost to this world; it has completely lost Christ. Jesus is dead — that is what Festus said, and it is true; but then nothing that came out here in Him has been lost. It has been transferred to another sphere outside the life of this world, outside the reach of sin and death, outside every corrupt influence, and outside church failure; it has been transferred to the resurrection sphere.

Paul says, Remember that. In the election of God He has nothing else in view for every saint, but then it needs a Paul to be prepared to suffer and endure if the elect of God are to obtain it. Paul suffered in order that the elect might obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Then Paul goes on to quote this faithful word.

Ques Would this help us in the path today?

CAC I think it would, because we belong to a Person who is outside the whole course of this world. One could not think of Him in Parliament; then one could not be interested in getting people sent to Parliament, because that is a sphere where He is not. The religious systems of this world are designed to carry on in relation to this world; one cannot bring the risen Man into that. He is not in that order of things; therefore we want to go on with the order of things where He lives. Where does He live?

Ques Was He not in the religious systems when here?

CAC In a certain way He was. He recognised the temple as His Father's house, but it was not His Father's house at the end. There was a religious system that was connected with life in this world, and God has discarded that altogether. Paul maintained that God had discarded it, and he suffered as an evildoer because he maintained that God had discarded the religious system connected with life in this world. Paul inaugurated another system which stands connected with the sphere where Jesus lives.

We need to know the risen Man outside of everything here if we are to be morally separate from things here, and find the company and support that we want. We need the company and support of those near to the Lord; and if we are to find the company of such we must be governed by these great and forcible realities.

2 TIMOTHY 2 (THIRD READING)

2 Timothy 2

Ques Is a firm foundation what faith can take its stand upon and act upon?

CAC Yes; there is that which is of God in the midst of all the defection and failure. There *is* what is of God and it is a great thing to go on with that. Certain principles mark the foundation. The two principles in verse 19 mark what has divine stability, and nothing has divine stability but what is marked by these principles. We feel how unstable everything is in the religious world; people have an idea that all truths and doctrines are open to question, and they do not know where they are or what to believe. We need exercise to be identified with what is stable, that is, what is of God in the midst of all that is changing. Whatever man may do there is a divine building. "On this rock I will build my assembly", and that building is marked by stability; "hades' gates shall not prevail against it". There is a tendency to look at this as if it were an abstract statement applying to the invisible church. The building of Christ is a real thing that is worked out by divine grace and power in souls; it is a spiritual reality. I think that firm foundation is that which gives divine stability to souls. It is plainly marked by these two great principles — "The Lord knows those that are his"; and, "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity". The first principle is that there is something recognised by the Lord; the question is, does the Lord recognise me as His? People say they know the Lord, *but does He know you*? By and by people will come to the Lord and say they know Him, and He will say, I do not know you. It is a serious matter; the question is raised, does the Lord know me?

Ques We were noticing last week an illustration of this in Numbers 16. Will you tell us about it? In verse 5 we read, "The Lord will show who are his". Here in 2 Timothy it is, "The Lord knows those that are his".

CAC Yes, He will show who are His *tomorrow*, but now He *knows* them. This is very important in a day when christian profession is carried out under man's eye. A great deal is thought of how we appear to *others*, but we should start with the question, how does the Lord regard me?

Rem Two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, men of renown, rose up. It was a critical state of things.

CAC Yes, we see it in the epistle to Philadelphia: "I will make them of the synagogue of Satan ... to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee". That is tomorrow; He will show it *tomorrow*, but *now* He knows. Are we content in the meantime with the Lord knowing? The Lord

knows by moral signs; it is not an inscrutable thing. Take John 1: different souls come up to the Lord and they have all divine marks; no one else can discern, but the Lord can. He never trusted anything not of His Father. When the Lord saw a bit of the Father's work in a soul He could say, I know that, and He did not know anything else. When He saw the Father's work, He could commit Himself; He recognised it. We pass over this word in Timothy as a commonplace thing, but it is a serious exercise to say, is there that about me which the Lord can recognise as His own?

Rem You get the other side of the seal in Numbers 16: 20 - 26, "The Lord said, Separate yourselves", and "Get you up from about the habitation of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram". Then Moses says, "Depart ... from the tents of these wicked men".

CAC It illustrates what is before us in the most striking manner. We get the private side of the seal and the public one. "The Lord knows those that are his" is a private matter, and separation from iniquity is a public step; that is, you take a public step in separation.

Ques When you speak of a public step, do you mean from what is ecclesiastically wrong?

CAC No, it says '*iniquity*'. If you name the name of the Lord, you have to separate from anything that does not give the Lord His place. It must be inwardly judged; mere outward separation would be pharisaism. "Withdraw from iniquity" is a public act; you take yourself away from it. Iniquity is unrighteousness, and righteousness is measured by what is due to the Lord.

Ques Is this the same as 2 Corinthians 6: 17, "Come out from among them"?

CAC I think it applies rather within the professing church, not to the heathen as in 2 Corinthians 6: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate ... and touch not the unclean thing". There it is primarily the profane idolatrous world; we get the contrast, Christ and Belial, light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness, the temple of God and idolatry. Saints are called out of this heathen world, but then Scripture contemplates iniquity in the sphere of the christian profession. It is a very solemn thing how little is thought of what is due to divine Persons. I was greatly affected a few years ago in Wigtown by seeing a monument to two women who were tied to stakes at low water to be drowned, the old one far out and the young one of eighteen near, so that she could see the old one drowned and be given an opportunity to recant. The inscription on the monument was, 'They died to maintain the rights of Christ in His assembly'. The point of righteousness is that you maintain the rights of Christ. If I call Jesus Lord the first principle with me must be to maintain what

is due to Him. All else is unrighteousness and we are called to withdraw from it. It is a test for every one of us; we ought not to assume we have done it, but to see it is a divine obligation on every one of us. It might involve martyrdom even. I have often been struck by the fact that the martyrs frequently died for what might be called a very small point; if they would have changed a word or an expression, sometimes they could have been saved; it often all hung on a word and they might save their lives. Many died for what we, in a cold blooded way, call a non-essential. We are in a terrible day now; the whole talk is of the rights of man. We would like to hear about the rights of God and of Christ. If christians were in the spirit of these two women there would be some testimony for God. Things may look well in the eyes of men, but if the rights of Christ are not maintained it is iniquity, because He is the *Lord*, and He is the only One who has any rights. Maintaining the rights of Christ is the mark of the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is not the primary defect that the rights of Christ are not maintained, but the primary defect is that no place is given to the Spirit. The man who speaks by the Spirit says *Lord* to Jesus. The Holy Spirit does not lead in any uncertain way, but the mark of His leading is that we own the lordship of Christ. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit". Supposing the Spirit had His way with all the saints in T., what would they do? They would all be saying Lord to Jesus, not with lips only but with their hearts, giving Him His due.

Rem That would bring us together.

CAC Yes; we are to follow righteousness, etc., with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Rem Righteousness is the basis of christian fellowship, the basis of God's throne and of the kingdom.

CAC And of all peace. We get all through Scripture the connection between righteousness and peace; we find them in many places together. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace". "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other". If there is to be peace practically among saints it must be on the basis of righteousness. There is a tendency with us to have peace at any price, but if you put peace first there is nothing in that for God. There is a movement in the religious world to get christians to sink their differences and all to come together. This could only be by every one agreeing to give up what they hold. If we hold fast only to what we all agree on, we should give up a great deal.

We ought to consider this chapter very much; it is the most important chapter for the last days; it gives us instruction for the last days. The principle of attraction is found in following "righteousness, faith, love, peace" (verse 22); if christians took account of *me* as following righteousness, faith, love, peace,

they would want to be with me. The first thing is that the Lord *knows*. The start is that there is what the Father has wrought and the Lord takes account of. Then there is what men can take account of — "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace". That has in view a company; it is "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart".

Ques Why does this verse 21 come in here speaking of being serviceable to the Master?

CAC "If therefore *one* shall have purified himself ... he shall be a vessel to honour". That is the individual side; each one is to be a sanctified vessel. It seems to me that the iniquity of verse 19 identifies itself with persons. You cannot withdraw from iniquity merely as an abstract thing; iniquity connects itself with persons. The great house is used as a figure. We are responsible to judge of the character of vessels and I cannot separate from them if I do not judge them. If a man identifies himself with a principle of unrighteousness he is a vessel to dishonour. "If therefore one shall have purified himself from these, in separating himself from them, he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master". It is most encouraging: "he shall be a vessel to honour".

Ques Is it the same as in John 12: 26, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour"?

CAC It is the same principle. It is a great thing to seek honour. People in the world seek it. It would be a great thing for us if we went in for honour, "the honour that cometh from God only".

Ques Do we get the same thing in the close of Malachi? "They ... spake often one to another: and the Lord ... heard it, and a book of remembrance was written ... . And they shall be mine, saith the Lord ... when I make up my jewels".

CAC Yes, that is beautiful. There was that about them which marked them under the Lord's eye, and then they were known to each other. How wonderful to be a jewel in the eyes of the Lord! I do not doubt this idea of vessels is derived from the holy vessels of the sanctuary. When the people returned from captivity, the vessels they brought back were all counted. There were 5,400; they had been in Babylon and they came back to Jerusalem, and they were all counted. It is like that today. The vessels have been carried away to Babylon, a system marked by the glory of man, and now the thing is to come back to Jerusalem, the city of the great King. It is not what we do; there is no idea of activity in a vessel, it must be carried by another. The Master can put out His hand and take any one of them, they are clean and ready. And that is what

the Lord does. All this comes in the way of compensation. If we are marked by fidelity we shall be circumscribed and in a limited sphere of reproach, but what a compensation to be a vessel to honour!

Rem One often feels, after an opportunity is gone, that one lost it because one was not ready to speak.

CAC Yes, that is a most humbling exercise; one has often had it. There has been a plain opening and one has not been equal to it. What a difference there is, speaking practically, if you are with the Lord! How easy it is then; you do not seem to need any effort, you are prepared. Sometimes we speak because we feel we *ought* to, and there is not much in it. The thing is to be ready for the Lord to use one and to feel He has taken one up and used one. We think service is what the servant does, but it is what the Lord does with the vessel.

Rem Down to the end of verse 21 it is very individual, but to pursue righteousness is with other people.

CAC It supposes Christians are to walk together; there is no giving up of that. You will always find somebody better than yourself! It is a great thing there are those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It would be great gain to be with a few people like that.

The pursuit of righteousness is a continual exercise; it is not like a path with a definite termination; it is a thing that is never to cease; the pursuit is to go on continually. It must be a continual exercise to seek out these great principles of action. The tendency is that when people have taken a certain step of faithfulness and find blessing out of it, they settle down and go to sleep. This exercise *must* be kept up with us, for even if we go on in the divine path for some time, we may drop out of it. There is no security for any of us save as we pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.

Ques How would you speak of faith in this connection?

CAC Faith is the only thing that would sustain one in pursuit of righteousness. The tendency is to systematise what God does. God moves and then man systematises; you find it everywhere, even in our meetings. We have to see to it that faith is maintained; we soon get away from faith and go on in an orthodox way. The recovery from Babylon was a very blessed work; it was purely God's grace, and yet it became in the end pharisaism; that is what it all developed into. Even though the people were recalled to the Scriptures, yet faith and love ceased to characterise them, so that when the Lord came to earth He had to reproach the people that there was not faith or love with them.

Ques What is a "pure heart" spoken of in verse 22? Could every Christian be said to have a pure heart?

CAC I suppose it is characteristic of Christians as such. Speaking of the conversion of the gentiles in Acts 15: 9, Peter says that their hearts were purified by faith.

Rem In his epistle Peter also says, "Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth".

CAC Yes. He says, "love one another out of a pure heart fervently". I think a pure heart is a heart delivered from selfishness by the knowledge of the love of God. The love of God gives one a pure heart because it breaks the power of the selfish motives that had governed us. Nothing will break the power of selfishness but love. A heart brought under the influence of the love of God is free from all those things that mark the natural man. If God has given me everything in His love I do not need to be seeking and grasping after something for myself, and then one can call on God with a simple reference to God's will, with nothing but a true desire to walk in the path of God's will. We see the model of all these things in the Lord; it is very encouraging to see that.

Rem We get an instance of the reverse of this in those who said "Lord, Lord", and did not the things that He said.

CAC Yes, that illustrates it exactly; that would be calling on the Lord out of an *impure* heart; a pretence of calling on Him and no intention of doing what He says. A pure heart calls on Him because it is set to do what He says.

Rem It is happy to own His authority. Many christians choose their own path.

CAC That is a denial of the lordship of Christ. It is a fundamental truth of christianity that Jesus is Lord. It is the owning of Jesus as Lord that brings us together rightly and marks us off as true christians.

Ques Does it suggest that in this day there are those who do not call on the Lord out of a pure heart?

CAC It suggests there is christian profession without a pure heart. Men have no intention of doing what the Lord says. The exercise with us should be to be here for God's will; we are set to "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace"; all these things are the will of God. If people are caught in Satan's snare the servant is to seek to recover them. Satan is doing his best to get christians to be here for their own will, which is really Satan's will, but our object should be to be here for God's will. There is a beautiful word in John 7: 18, "He that speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but he that seeks the glory of him

that has sent him, he is true, and unrighteousness is not in him". That is what the Lord was. You see righteousness there, a blessed Man seeking the glory of the One who sent Him. When we begin to measure things by the will of God it throws a new light on everything. Christendom is full of good things which we like and even approve, but when we put them in the light of God's will there is no justification for them.

Rem At the beginning of the passage we read, "If any one desire to practise his will, he shall know concerning the doctrine", John 7: 17.

CAC Yes, the one who is said to practise the will of God has a pure heart; God has His right place in the thoughts of such a one: that is a christian characteristically. It may make us very ashamed of ourselves, but that *is* a christian.

Rem We are not always prepared to do God's will.

CAC If we examine our motives we find them very mixed, and this necessitates self-judgment. We have to remember there is a snare of the devil referred to in the passage we are reading. The snare of the devil is anything that takes us off the line of God's will, and of righteousness, faith, love and peace. It is a perversion of things brought about in a man's mind which results in his opposing the truth. The servant is to recover him. He is not to be left as a bad job. This shows the recoverability of a bad case.

Rem Speaking of the qualities of an overseer in 1 Timothy 3, it says, "the overseer then must be irreproachable ... apt to teach ... mild, not addicted to contention".

CAC Yes, it speaks of what was in the Lord Himself. The devil did his best to take that blessed One in his snare, but nothing moved Him out of the path of God's will.

Rem It is said of the Lord, "He shall not strive or cry out, nor shall any one hear his voice in the streets".

CAC Yes, it is a most important principle. When one has to do with all sorts of evil there is such a danger of getting into contentions. If we have the truth it keeps us quiet, because we trust in the Lord to support it. We have to put it before people in a spirit of meekness and the Lord supports it. We have not to contend. This gives us great peace as to controversies in which the truth is in question. The path of the testimony in the last days is beset by controversies. All the truth we have has been got by controversies; we do not need to be alarmed about it.

Rem Division may result from it.

CAC Division among saints is the fruit of self-will. If no will is at work brethren would never divide. I often say *brethren* never do divide! If we were really brethren we should say, We do not see alike, but we *must* see alike, and we will pray until we *do* see alike. If we are really brethren we shall never divide, but there are those among us who do oppose the truth as we find in verse 25. If they are not really bad they will be recovered by the servant in meekness instructing those that oppose. If there is nothing bad at the bottom of a man's heart he will be recovered, but if self will is working he may be allowed to go on and fall over the precipice.

Ques Our attention is called in the next chapter to those we have to turn away from. There are those God may give repentance to, but it is a serious thing when we have to turn away from any. What is the difference between the two?

CAC The men in chapter 3 are clearly unconverted persons; they have "no love for what is good", they are "lovers of pleasure". You cannot do anything with them, there is nothing of God there. You do not keep company with persons of that sort. The Lord tells us not to cast pearls before swine. If people have no love for what is good, what can you do with them?

Rem One is exercised about people who are professedly servants of the Lord, as to how far one should combat that sort of thing.

CAC The Lord said of the Pharisees, "Let them alone". But another class is contemplated not at all like these. They come into opposition with the truth. We find brothers — for the time — coming into opposition, and they have to be dealt with in gentleness and meekness so that they may be recovered. We have to act in such a way that they may be won.

Ques In what way would they recover themselves?

CAC By repentance. If God gives it to them to the acknowledgment of the truth, they wake up and see they have just been in the snare of the devil all the time.

Rem It is a great deliverance when a man who has been opposing the truth is led to see it and wakes up and repents and is found once more for God's will in this world.

CAC It is a blessed deliverance! It can only be brought about by coming into the atmosphere of Matthew 11. The Lord says, "Come to me". Just stand where I stand, look at things as I look at them — and then He says, "Learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart". It is very beautiful. We are to be characterised by His spirit; this is how He always had to do with opposers. He

endured such contradiction of sinners, and those cavilling. See how quietly He answered them, and how gentle He was!

Ques Would you say there is restoration when they recover themselves?

CAC Yes, the snare is broken. To my mind it is very important that we should count on more power for recovery. Nothing exercises me more than the lack of power of recovery. If people get wrong it seems impossible to get them right again.

Ques Is it lack of exercise on their part?

CAC That may be, but what troubles me is my part. I feel one ought to have more power to get them right. We have to bear in mind that if there is anything of God in a soul it will respond to the Spirit of Christ. If a man is wrong and I can approach him in the Spirit of Christ, in the faithful grace of Christ, he will respond, and then one must not let him go until one has got him back for God's will.

Ques Do you think we fail in not having drunk sufficiently into the Spirit of the One who came *down* to recover men?

CAC Yes. A new order of man is brought into the world, man in Christ Jesus — not glorified in heaven but brought in morally down here. We find it all through this epistle: there is "faith and love ... in Christ Jesus"; "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"; "live godly in Christ Jesus". Paul spoke of his "ways ... in Christ". That is, the qualities of Christ Jesus are brought in morally down here, it is down here they are seen. If we are on the line of what is in Christ Jesus we shall show His qualities. If we have not the Spirit of Christ we shall pretend to have it. Jannes and Jambres imitated what Moses did; but what he did by divine power they did by human, or perhaps satanic power, but in the end the finger of God triumphed. There came a time when it was a question of life and then they could do nothing. When Moses and Aaron turned the dust into lice, "the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice", but they could do nothing and they had to say, "This is the finger of God". The moment it was a question of life they were baffled. You can imitate what is external in a christian, but it is imitation and will sooner or later be exposed.

Ques Would you say that *we* could imitate?

CAC I think there is a great deal of imitation in christendom, and I find all the evils of christendom in my own heart. Whatever is current in christendom you find in yourself. But if you get on to the line of what is in Christ Jesus that is the vital line and that will triumph.

Rem What I find in myself is assuming to be what I am not.

CAC Yes, there is an outward show that has nothing behind it; it is very humiliating. If we were only content to be what the grace of God has made us, how happy we should be!

Rem We want the continuation of Christ in His people.

CAC Christianity is the continuation of Christ in the saints. I do not understand anything else. We want to keep clear of all imitation. Let us have the real thing! What a contrast the apostle draws. Some men "found worthless as regards the faith", and the end is "their folly shall be completely manifest to all". Then the contrast is in "my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings ... and the Lord delivered me out of all", 2 Timothy 3: 10, 11.

2 TIMOTHY 3

2 Timothy 3

Ques Is there more failure in this dispensation than in any other?

CAC There was a time when God had not revealed Himself. The full light of God has come out in Christ; it has all been manifested in Him. The Spirit is here; it is a day of divine resource, so that any failure in the church period is more serious than in any other period. A new element of evil has been brought in that was never there before. Judas went out from the circle of divine love and carried an element into the world which had never existed before; it was the element of apostasy. He went out from the brightest light that ever shone in this world; it was a very solemn thing. Those people, once in the christian profession, who have apostatised or are on the way to apostasy have really gone out of the light of christianity. It is the result of going out of the light. Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses by imitation. Moses acted in divine power but those people resisted him by imitation.

The only antidote to all the evil present was what had been seen in Paul and that which Paul is encouraging Timothy to go on with. He is to follow Paul, and we are to follow Paul's teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, endurance. Those things will preserve us from all departure. To follow what is of God is the only safeguard; there is movement. To follow up gives the idea of movement.

Rem It shows that the truth has a living power.

CAC It is of vital importance to be on the lifeline. The positive side of things is the line of vitality, and what is vital is shown in movement. The energy of life came out fully in Paul; it was fully exhibited in him. Timothy was to follow Paul, and it is for us to follow also. The literal reading gives the idea of energy that pursues things. You pursue things if you want to reach them.

Rem 'To advance be all our care'.

CAC Yes, that is a fine principle and the only safeguard against apostasy. There are two classes contemplated in Hebrews: those going on to perfection, and those who draw back to perdition. Which are we pursuing? The going on preserves us. God would have us occupied more with what is positive and good. He tells us of evil, but would have us occupied with good and pursuing it.

Rem The truth has an important place; teaching, etc., is covered by that.

CAC The Lord could say, "I am the truth". Saints cannot say that, but we are told that the Spirit is the truth and the Spirit dwells in the saints, and so in that way the saints become the vessels of truth.

Rem It is remarkable how teaching is put before conduct.

CAC Teaching must always be the first thing; if the teaching is not sound, the wells are poisoned. It is remarkable that most of what Paul says is of a very practical nature.

Rem All came out personally in the Lord Jesus. Paul had to carry on the life of faith; the life of Christ is the life of a christian.

CAC Yes, nothing is of any value but what is living in Christ. We were speaking of being on the lifeline; it is the life of Christ. You get the spring of it all in the teaching; and the result is persecution and suffering.

Rem So that suffering becomes the lot of all who live piously in Christ Jesus.

CAC It is the kind of thing that does not commend itself to men at all. There is no other way for the godly now than to live piously in Christ Jesus.

Rem Everything is consistent with the revelation. With Abraham his piety was consistent with the revelation he had, and christianity must be consistent with what has been revealed.

CAC It is living piously in this new line of life which God has brought in. It is the moral effect of revelation. The religious systems are built up on the wrong man. The true character of Christianity is very little known. It is very much connected with man as in flesh, but true piety in Christ Jesus is really on the line of God's anointed Man; and if God comes out and reveals Himself, He must set aside man in the flesh, religious or otherwise. If you take the scripture before us we see the conduct, purpose, and faith of Paul. He had had every advantage as a man in flesh, but he considered it all loss for Christ; he cast all his natural advantages aside, and suffered the loss of all things. That was his conduct, faith and purpose. The will of God came out in him. The word 'purpose' is very important. I have thought that desire is the result of new birth. Everyone born again has desire, but purpose is the result of having the Spirit. In purpose, one is definitely set, there is power. You must have power to say, "O God, my heart is fixed". Many people say that, and then, when they get outside the door, the smallest thing turns them away!

Ques Would you say that purpose is the counterpart of will in a Christian?

CAC If purpose does not take the place of will, we shall not make much headway as Christians. Purpose leads to activity and it gives definiteness; it is

what characterises the man of God. It is very important; there is so much that is purposeless amongst saints. It was what the Lord complained of in Laodicea: "Thou art neither cold nor hot". There was a slack state, easy-going, drifting. How many saints appear all right outwardly, but are really marked by indefiniteness — there is just a condition of drifting with surrounding circumstances. Paul was marked by purpose. A man without purpose in life is of little value; he is very much like a jelly-fish.

Rem I suppose it is in Philippians 3 that Paul's purpose comes out; he had a fixed heart, "That I may win Christ".

CAC Yes, he was set to have Christ for his gain. To a man of purpose there is no difficulty. We all have proved, I am sure, that if there is ever so little purpose the Lord has helped us, but if we have not had purpose we have not had the Lord's support, and have found things too difficult for us.

Rem Paul experienced special deliverance from the Lord.

CAC Yes, and it is very striking how he refers to things at the beginning of his career. Antioch, Iconium and Lystra were the places that he visited at the beginning of his calling. He had experience there of how the Lord helped him. It is a great thing to have something to look back to in your history, some time when the Lord has been strong on your behalf and has helped you. It is good to look back to a time of difficulty that you have gone through and have found the Lord sufficient. What a time it was! It is a great principle with God to give a man a taste of what he may expect at the very beginning. It was at Lystra that Paul was stoned and left for dead. Fourteen years after he speaks of the time when he was caught up to paradise; it exactly corresponds with the time when he was stoned. He was left for dead, and the Lord came in, and gave him a taste of heaven; he was taken up to paradise and heard wonderful things. The Lord can deliver and give you heavenly compensation. Paul was taken up for dead but it seems possible that then it was that his spirit went to paradise. Fancy coming back into this world with heavenly secrets in his heart, things that he cannot ever tell anyone! It must have given him an immense sense of the Lord's triumph and grace.

Rem I suppose the apostle wrote the epistles from an overflowing heart?

CAC That is really the difference between the New Testament and the Old. The Old Testament was written as the Lord made them write; they probably did not understand what they wrote; but the New Testament is man's own experiences. The writing of the epistles was part of Paul's responsible service.

I think the taking up of the cross implies that a man is prepared to go that way. If a man was seen with his cross everyone well knew that he was on the

way to execution. Timothy knew all those things; he had seen them in Paul and had been taught from the Scriptures, and he was to 'abide' in all those things and not to be moved away. He had learnt things livingly, he had been in living contact with Paul. We learn too much from books. Timothy was Paul's true child, that is, he was like him. The Scriptures have a great value in a day of departure; every letter of Scripture is important. The whole controversy sometimes turns on a letter; for example, "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed; which is Christ", Galatians 3: 16. If you added one letter you would spoil it. Scripture furnishes us with everything that is necessary; we do not need to go out of Scripture for anything. The man of God is fully fitted by Scripture. Scripture is very wonderful.

Ques What is the thought of being wise unto salvation?

CAC Salvation is in Christ Jesus. There is everything in Him to secure the soul from all sources of evil. There is divine wisdom which the Scriptures are able to give on the line of faith in Christ Jesus; that is, one who has the faith that is in Christ Jesus would have an apprehension of Scripture. One would have a sense of the way in which Scripture applies to every difficulty and in that way saints may become wise unto salvation; they are not caught with any subtle snare of the enemy. Everything that is contrary to good works has become corrected.

Timothy followed up what he had seen in Paul; that was the line he was on. That is the line we should be on, too; we have to follow up what is vital. There was perfect transparency in the Lord and in the apostle. We ought to consider more than we have done the life and character of Paul. You see christianity in Paul; if I may say so, you cannot quite see it in Christ, that is to say, you do not see the divine triumph in Christ because He was a Man out of heaven. You see the divine triumph in Paul, "who before was a blasphemer and persecutor, and an insolent overbearing man". It is in such a man you see the divine triumph! People say, We must be occupied with Christ. Yes, I say, and with Paul also! He is put before us as a model, and the spirit and service of Paul are an integral part of christianity. He says you have "fully known *my* doctrine, manner of life". That is the triumph. In Christ you see the power and grace that could effect the triumph, but in Paul you see the triumph. If ever a man was marked by what was diabolical it was Paul, and yet you see such a man transformed; the Spirit and life and ways of Christ reproduced and perpetuated in a man who still has the flesh in him, who is still, as we say, in a mixed condition. There is the triumph of God!

Rem We read that Saul was to be changed to another man.

CAC Yes, those early chapters of Samuel show us the moral road to the kingdom; they are most instructive.

2 TIMOTHY 4

2 Timothy 4

CAC It is striking how we get the thought of completeness introduced. In spite of all failure and departure there is the thought of completeness; the man of God is to be complete.

Timothy is to fill up the full measure of his ministry. Paul also refers to his own course as a complete one; he knew all the declension and the departure, and he had pointed out the sources of evil, but in his own service what was complete and perfect had been found. It is very encouraging to find this in an epistle that contemplates such failure.

JBS used to tell us we had a wrong idea of a remnant, as if it were a worn-out fragment whereas it is a bit of the original. Remnant times are times which give an opportunity for a bit of the original thing to come out, that which was at the beginning. We see in Philadelphia all the original characteristics of the assembly.

Rem It is very interesting to notice in the address to Philadelphia that the word 'behold' is not there (see New Translation). 'Behold' is a call to attention. They did not need arousing to the coming of the Lord; it is just "I come quickly", Revelation 3: 11.

CAC It is most encouraging for us. There is a tendency in a day of departure to be unduly occupied with failure. Nothing could be more depressing than to feel it is all over and no getting out of it. To quote J.B.S. again, he used to say, 'When a man says it is all over it shows it *is* all over with *him*'.

Rem If we are discouraged we shall discourage others.

CAC Paul could speak of some who were with him when he was near to being left alone. He was left alone at one particular moment (verse 16), but he can speak of some with him at this time.

Ques Would you distinguish between the remnant and remnant character?

CAC The remnant would include all that is for God; that was the idea in Israel. You find in Thyatira there is a remnant and in Sardis there is another; it is what is for God.

Rem There was evidently enough in the Old Testament to make Timothy complete.

CAC The scriptures he had known from a child were the Old Testament, but in chapter 3: 16 "*every* scripture" includes the New Testament. A good part of

the New Testament was written at this time, possibly all except John's gospel. There are certain writings recognised as divinely inspired and we do not need anything outside these writings; they are sufficient to make the man of God complete. It is very emphatic "complete, fully fitted to every good work".

Ques What are we to understand by the man of God being perfect?

CAC It is the thought of completeness. The Lord says to Sardis, "I have not found thy works *complete*". The great point is that we do not need to go outside Scripture for anything. It is an immense stay to be quietly settled in that. It is dangerous ground to go outside our limit. Scripture marks our limits. We might get a good spiritual thought, but we cannot be sure it is right until we find it in Scripture.

Ques Could you tell us about 'good work'; would it refer to everything that is God's will for us?

CAC It would be particularly the service of God. The man of God is given up to the service of God, and every good work would be everything that had place in that service. It is a question of acting for God; a man of God is made perfect so that he may act for God. There is a sphere in which we are called to serve God in connection with holy things; the truth, the welfare of saints, the interests of Christ; it is every good work in that connection and therefore everything must be in accord with the Scriptures. It is not the details of everyday life, but what a man is called to do in connection with the service of God.

Paul is going out in triumph, in assured victory, and he reviews his course in the presence of the Lord. He was in every way ready for the kingdom; it would bring him nothing but a crown. He does not look back on his course as many of us might have to do and say, it has all been failure from first to last.

Rem The apostle had failures.

CAC *Why* do the failures strike us? Just because they are such a contrast to what he was normally. It is a principle with God not to dwell on the failures of His people. The great object with God is the fruit of His work in His people. If only one thing in them is pleasing to God, He will single that out to speak of. To see what the grace of God can do with a man is what helps and encourages us. Paul could say, "By the grace of God I am what I am"; he took full account of what God's grace had made him.

Rem Paul had profited by his failure.

CAC Paul had not failed in his ministry. He had fulfilled the ministry he was entrusted with, and he exhorts Timothy to do the same. "Fill up the full

measure of thy ministry" (verse 5).

There is the idea of completeness; it is very encouraging to me.

Ques Is the crown here the same as the incorruptible crown in 1 Corinthians 9?

CAC The incorruptible crown is in contrast to all the honours a man might have on earth: "they do it to obtain a corruptible crown".

It is deeply humbling to feel what a contrast our course has been to Paul's, but it is very encouraging to see what divine resources can do for a man. Paul loved Christ's appearing because all the principles that would be introduced then were already established in him; all that would dominate the kingdom had already its place in Paul.

Ques The way Timothy is charged is very significant. What is the thought of it? One would have thought that a faithful servant like Timothy would hardly have needed such a charge.

CAC He is put on his responsibility in a most solemn way. We need to give full place to the principle of responsibility; Scripture is careful to maintain it.

Rem Some seem to think responsibility such an ugly word.

CAC That indicates a bad state of soul. Any shrinking from responsibility indicates a state of soul morally bad, because we are creatures and the place of a creature in reference to God is one of responsibility.

The first effect of divine work in the soul is the fear of God, and that is the recognition of responsibility. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; it is the first thing when a soul wakes up to feel it is responsible to God. Every light in which God is pleased to reveal Himself gives a new character to responsibility.

Ques Grace is not set aside by responsibility, is it?

CAC Grace puts the proper mark on responsibility; it is entirely taken up in grace. Every responsibility is formed by grace; it is that which grace has brought in; it is measured by our privilege, and by the light that God has brought in.

Rem Demas disregarded his responsibility.

CAC Yes, Paul says, 'He has forsaken me' — a very solemn thing.

Ques Does responsibility take us back to the parable in Luke 19?

CAC There you get the Lord's own teaching on the subject of responsibility; you cannot improve on the Lord's teaching. There you get how men used divine wealth.

Responsibility turns on how you use divine wealth. The "high-born man" has brought wealth down and left it here. It is the knowledge of God, and responsibility turns on this — How do you make use of the wealth the Son of God has brought to you? The point is how to handle it so that it is increased. It is marvellous to think that we could increase what the Lord brought! *We* should not have dared to say we could increase it, but the Lord says, 'Now you use my wealth in such a way that it increases, and if you do there is a day coming when I will say, Well done, thou good servant'. That is not all failure. There *was* a man who was all failure but he was a wicked servant; he did not know the grace of his master.

Rem We are apt to think we have to find something for God out of nothing, but that is what the wicked servant thought.

CAC That is the natural thought of responsibility, but the spiritual thought of it is that the Lord brought everything and we are to use what He brought.

Ques Is the pound the same as in Matthew?

CAC They were each given the same in Luke, but in Matthew each was given a gift according to his several ability. In Luke it is the general knowledge of God in grace that has been brought into the world and is normally or by activity increased, but with some they fold up the knowledge of God in a creed, and it has no living operative character. With a true Christian the knowledge of God is living and operative. We get here the common responsibility of all in the Christian profession; there is the same knowledge of grace, the same revelation to all. The Lord does not give an imperfect setting forth of grace to anyone; the believer uses it, but the unbeliever does not use it or trade. In one sense the idea is that grace is multiplied in its subjects, as we see in Colossians 1: 5, 6, "the glad tidings which are come to you ... are bearing fruit and growing". We would think that the gospel was so big at the beginning that it would not get bigger, but Paul says it is *growing*. What is of God spreads out and increases through the exercises and activities of grace among ourselves. We came here tonight to do a little business, did we not? It is turning the stock over, and every time it increases. If you are used to give a little knowledge of God to another it is enlarged in you also, so it is distinctly bigger in the other and in yourself.

Ques Is that growth in the assembly?

CAC In the assembly what one has, what is there, becomes available for the good of all. We read here, "proclaim the word", then "convict, rebuke, encourage" among the saints. We have every aspect inside and outside.

Ques When Paul says, "I have combated the good combat", would that cover his whole course?

CAC It covers his responsible life in service. It does not say he had no failure, but failure was not characteristic of Paul. He says, "I have finished the race" — there was the beginning, the course and the finish. The apostle never turned back, never left his first love; he went on. If you speak of his failure, it grew out of his love to his people and going after them. His very failures were due to Christ's love in his heart towards his people, but the Lord never says to him, 'You have failed'. The Lord comes and stands by him and says, "Be of good courage; for as thou hast testified the things concerning me at Jerusalem, so thou must bear witness at Rome also". It is a very unhealthy sign to be occupied with Paul's failure. We need to see the wonderful character of life in Christ Jesus that marked a man down here. When we get occupied with failure it is because we see so much in ourselves, and it makes us want to be easy on ourselves.

Rem Timothy was not promised a very successful time; he was told the time would come when they would not listen, but he was to keep on.

CAC Yes, that is it, to keep on and "fill up the full measure" of his ministry.

Rem Paul must have felt deeply that all forsook him.

CAC It was the greatest moment in his history, I should think.

Ques Was it some special occasion before the emperor?

CAC Yes, I think he was permitted to answer at Nero's court, and Nero was such a monster that the brethren were all frightened and forsook Paul, but he had the rich compensation of the Lord standing by him. Paul was allowed to speak before all the ambassadors of the world, "that all the gentiles might hear".

It is very interesting to note the different occasions when the Lord manifested Himself to Paul; it is a most profitable study. It was a reality; it was not just as we say, 'The Lord was with me', and all we mean is that we had a fairly good time! It was very solemn that Paul could say, they "all deserted me". It is very sad to think of the saints all deserting him.

Rem Paul's pathway was like the Lord's.

CAC Yes, I think it was given to Paul in a remarkable way to walk in the path trodden by the Lord.

Rem It is encouraging what he says about Mark.

CAC That shows how a servant may step out of the path in his responsible history and yet get back. Paul had to be very severe with Mark.

Ques "Delivered out of the mouth of the lion" — is that Satan or the emperor?

CAC Well, they were very near together! He may have meant being thrown to the lions; that was the end Nero contemplated for him.

THE BREASTPLATE AND THE LOCAL ASSEMBLIES

Exodus 28:15-22; Exodus 28:29,30; Numbers 2: 32 - 34

CAC I am sure we have all found comfort and strength in thinking of the affectionate interest which the Lord has in us as individual saints. I suppose we have all experienced His succour and help, and have learnt that it is a precious reality that He lives to make intercession for us. But I have been wondering lately whether we have a sufficient sense of the Lord's affectionate interest in us as walking together in local assemblies; I am sure the Lord would give us an impression of His profound interest in us in that character.

In making these remarks I am referring to the fact that there were no names of individuals in the breastplate, but of "tribes", and, as I understand it, each tribe as a type would have its antitype in the local assembly. The Lord would give us a sense of the *speciality* of the way He thinks of us as on assembly ground in each locality.

Paul is in a particular way the representative of Christ, he is the "called apostle of Jesus Christ", and what marked him was great interest in local assemblies. No doubt he was interested in the saints in a general way, but his service, as we have it recorded in Scripture, is largely service to local assemblies. His epistles are nearly all addressed to saints in defined localities — Corinth, Rome, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, etc. In this, I think, he was peculiarly in accord with the heart of Christ, one might say with the stones in the breastplate.

Each assembly is in view as having its own particular character; the tribes as seen in the breastplate were all set together in unity, and they all moved in unity as standing in relation to the tent of meeting — the tabernacle of testimony; but each tribe had its own special place in the breastplate. I believe every local assembly has a distinct place on the heart of Christ. We may gather this from Revelation 2 and 3, where we have seven assemblies (no doubt representing all the assemblies), and each is addressed as having the special attention of the Lord. It would help us to get before us that the Lord has a peculiar and special interest in each local company.

I am not exactly thinking of all believers in a place, for they are not all in assembly order — divine order in relation to the tabernacle of testimony. I am looking at it in the light of the type before us; the type presents to us the people of God as seen in various companies, that is, in "tribes". If we think of defined companies today it must be the saints viewed in local assemblies; such defined companies are referred to frequently in the New Testament; we

read of "the assemblies of the saints"; they are defined companies clearly, but according to the type they are companies all standing in relation to one another in a universal unity, and standing in relation to the tent of meeting, and the tabernacle of testimony. That is clearly the setting of the type; it is not the people of God viewed as every man doing what is right in his own eyes, which is very much the condition of things in the religious world.

In the early part of Numbers things are seen according to divine order, and there is such a thing as an administration according to divine order. It is as having some sense of this that we are walking together; we desire to fall into line with the divine system, to escape from the lawless and disorderly systems which men have brought in, and to find our places locally and generally in the divine system, that system which was typified by the tribes in their ordered and proper places in relation to the tabernacle of testimony. That is the divine idea, and it is with that in view that we are walking together, if we are doing so intelligently and spiritually. We may have come to it in different ways, but that is what we reach if we reach anything at all according to God as to our position.

We do well to take account of this, and to remember that it puts us in a place where we receive peculiar and affectionate support direct from the heart of Christ. It is in that character typically that we are seen in the breastplate. It would help us to see that the teaching of the type does not refer to individual saints, but to the saints viewed tribally; that is, as definitely set together locally. This regards us as being together locally on true assembly ground; it is either that or what we may call ecclesiastical lawlessness; it is either a human system or the divine system.

We may remember that not only did Israel have twelve sons, but Ishmael also had twelve sons — "twelve princes of their peoples" (Genesis 25), representing typically the fact that there would be an administration connected outwardly with Abraham's house, but which takes character from one who will not own the rights of Christ, but who is a mocker when those rights are practically owned. The character of the administration which prevails in the religious world around us, which we have to face and overcome, is largely Ishmaelitish. There is a whole system which has to be cast out as opposed to Christ — an administration which sets up man in the flesh in his varied features. The twelve princes of Ishmael's line were prior to the twelve sons of Israel; the natural precedes the spiritual; but the spiritual is to displace the natural.

We are, I trust, learning to walk together locally as of the Israel of God, in divine order and forming part of the divine system. For those who come to

that there is special affectionate interest in the heart of Christ; it goes out to them, because they have found in some small way practically their right place in the divine administration. Each stone — each "tribe" — has its distinctive colour and value in the breastplate. Each tribe is a unit, but all the twelve tribes are set together in a universal unity, represented by the stones being fitted together in settings of gold. They are put together so that there is no thought suggested of independency; no local assembly is independent; it is divinely linked with every other assembly, yet each one has its own special place in the breastplate.

Ques Would the sons of Israel and Ishmael be set forth in Philadelphia and Laodicea?

CAC Yes, I think in principle things are headed up there. An administration which is according to the flesh is rejected by God, however pretentious, however it may be able to say, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing".

Ques Would you say that we are entitled to take account in a special way, as according to the mind of the Spirit, of those who gather on assembly ground?

CAC It is evident that the type does not allow for anything else. Every tribe is to be in its defined place, and in its proper relation to all the other tribes. They all have to encamp and move together; no thought of lawlessness is admitted. We cannot find in the type any justification for what is otherwise. If people are lawless and independent and carrying on divine things in a human and natural way, they are clearly not in the divine system in any practical sense; they do not in any way correspond with the stones in the breastplate.

The place of the tribes as seen in Numbers 2 corresponded with the place they had in the breastplate. There are four rows of stones in the breastplate, and in Numbers 2 there are four camps, each composed of three tribes; it is evident that they were preserved in every way from independency. No one tribe could move without its neighbours; then the four camps all moved together in unity, moving first, second, third, or fourth as divinely ordered, but all moving together. That is the practical side of the working out of assembly truth locally, and it is most important that assembly truth should be worked out locally. The devil is not particularly opposed to what is universal so long at it is left abstract and no attempt made to secure locally what corresponds with it. Many persons are prepared to read books and to enjoy all that is said of the church universally; they believe that the church includes all believers; they take in the universal idea in that sense, but they will not accept that what is universal has to be worked out locally. That is quite another matter because that means a clean break with the Ishmaelitish system, and it means coming

in a practical sense into a system that is of God. Every christian would accept, for example, that the Lord Jesus gave His body for all saints, but the test comes when we realise that, in the light of this, we should break bread locally, and take up together the responsibilities that go with the privilege. It is at once felt that difficulties will be encountered which only faith can overcome.

The enemy's point of attack is the local assembly, see Acts 20: 29, 30. His object is, of course, to assail what is universal; but his point of attack is the local assembly; we ought to realise that; it would preserve us from expecting that we are going to have all plain sailing in our local associations; we must expect to find the enemy operating in respect of the local assembly. The enemy will see to it that all kinds of difficulties are encountered that other people do not have. There are difficulties in the working out of the divine system that would not be met with in the Ishmaelitish system. All sorts of things rise up in the local assemblies, but how precious it is to know that in relation to these difficulties we have the affectionate interest of Christ, and we are borne on the heart of Christ in a peculiar way in relation to those very things. It is most encouraging.

The tabernacle was a wonderful system, and every detail in it represented what was spiritual and of God; but it was the tabernacle of testimony; that is, it speaks of God setting things forth in testimony, not in public power. When God does bring in His system publicly, as He will, it will necessitate the *public* setting aside of everything adverse to it. But God is not doing that now; He is bringing in His system in the way of testimony; bringing it in in such a way that it has to meet all the hostility of the enemy, and it has to be defended by the twelve tribes standing arrayed for military service. So that the position of the tribes around the tabernacle is a militant position. There are enemies all round, on every side of the square, and the testimony of God involves the maintenance of what is of God in the face of everything that is hostile.

Rem The thought of the testimony is universal, but it needs to be maintained locally.

CAC Yes, that is right; the tabernacle of testimony and the tent of meeting suggest universal thoughts. All the twelve tribes stood in relation to the one tabernacle, so the tabernacle itself represents what is universal. But then everything local, everything tribal, has to stand in relation to it, and our great exercise should be to bring everything local into proper relation to what is universal. The tabernacle, its service, the charge of the sanctuary, are universal things, but things locally have to be brought into right relation to them.

If things are regarded merely in the universal aspect there may be nothing practical or concrete about it, nothing that can be viewed as substantial. A great many people have a notion of the church universally as composed of all saints, and many preach a great deal of the truth of the church, but at the same time they go on locally with the Ishmaelitish system which recognises the natural and the fleshly. It is when the desire is awakened to work out the truth of the assembly locally that the test comes. That is what the devil is *against* and what Christ is *for*; and therefore in a path where we prove the special hostility of Satan it becomes very necessary that we should prove the affectionate support of Christ the Priest.

There is a word in 2 Corinthians 8: 23 that I should like to read: "Whether as regards Titus, he is my companion and fellow-labourer in your behalf; or our brethren, they are deputed messengers of assemblies, Christ's glory". It would affect us all greatly if we thought of the local assemblies as "Christ's glory". It is very touching. I suppose there are at least twelve little companies represented here this afternoon, and Paul would clothe us with divine thoughts; he would give us to understand that locally we are "Christ's glory", and this not as individuals, but as walking together locally in assembly conditions we are "Christ's glory". In saying this Paul was in accord with the heart of Christ and with the breastplate. It would be from this point of view that he had daily solicitude about "all the assemblies", 2 Corinthians 11: 28. Christ's glory is identified with local assemblies. The object of the enemy in all his efforts to produce local eruptions and discords is to assail Christ's glory, and if we kept that in mind it would steady our spirits, and we should be watchful and prayerful that we be not deflected from the way that we are represented in the breastplate. We might gather, I think, from the breastplate that each local assembly, as answering to the typical "tribe", is on the heart of Christ as having some distinctive glory. And every local exercise is permitted and designed in order to bring out that glory. It is intended that the local assembly shall correspond with the precious stone that represents it in the breastplate. The intercession of Christ has that in view; it would support us to that end.

Administrative exercises stand connected with our tribal position. The number twelve, as we have often heard, is the number of administration. We have to distinguish between exercises connected with the sanctuary and exercises connected with the tribes. In the service of the sanctuary, and its charge, all is priestly and levitical. The priests were all levites, and Levi was not in the breastplate. Divine service in praise and worship is not really local; the brethren in Exeter and New York all praise on the same universal notes. Ministry is the same, whether in Sydney or London, so that what is ministered

in one place holds equally good in every other place; but when we come to local exercises in administration they are not everywhere the same, though, of course, all have to be governed by the same universal principles, and the issue reached would be universally the same if precisely the same conditions had to be met; but questions arise in one place which do not arise in another, hence there is variety in administration. The administrative glory of Christ is so great that it could not all be seen in any one local assembly, but the divine thought is that it shall be seen in all the assemblies, as set together in relation to each other and to the tabernacle of testimony, and all in divine unity, whether seen as encamped, or as represented in the precious stones of the breastplate.

In the assemblies as represented by the twelve tribes there is divine administration, and Christ's glory seen in it; we could not get what answers to the number twelve in one individual or even in one assembly. The administration of Christ will be seen in its completeness in the heavenly city, but even there it is a diversified glory. The foundations of its wall have in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, but each one seen as having a distinctive glory. Take the three of them best known to us — Matthew, Peter, and John — how distinctive they are! The glories of the Lamb are diversified; the One who suffered and died is so great, He can be viewed in so many different lights, that His glories could not be set forth administratively in less than twelve men. We realise that each had his own place in setting Him forth.

The administration that will be seen in its completeness in the holy city is to be seen now in the local assemblies, viewed as typically set forth in the twelve tribes surrounding the tent of meeting. Christ's glory is to come into evidence in the way everything is handled, so that a spiritual administration is seen on earth that corresponds with the mind of heaven.

The different questions that arise locally develop Christ's glory in the assemblies. The direct service of God is one thing; His testimony is another; but the assemblies viewed as typified by the tribes are seen in a different relation. We may be sometimes inclined to wish that we had no other exercises save those connected with approach to God! I believe the most testing exercises are those connected with administration, for in taking them up we come into contact with what is not according to God; the 'tribes' have to encamp or move as on 'military service'. The local assemblies are in presence of the actual trying conditions that are here, need amongst the saints, perplexing questions of right and wrong, questions as to whom we can extend fellowship and from whom we are required to withdraw — all enter into this position.

Now it is just these exercises which impart distinctive colour to each local assembly. As to the testimony, the service of God, the ministry — in a word all that is priestly or levitical — it is universal, and all that is administrative has to be worked out in the light of it. But administrative exercises are local, and have to be worked out locally, and when worked out they give distinctive features of Christ's glory which answer to the stones in the breastplate. I think the type — taken in conjunction with the distinctive epistles of the New Testament — would warrant us in holding, for our comfort and encouragement, the precious thought that the assemblies are in the affections of Christ in a distinctive way in relation to their special responsibilities in administration. Whatever question or difficulty arises, Christ's glory is to come out in the way it is met; some particular feature of that glory is to be brought into evidence in each locality according to the occasions that arise locally. In every case, perhaps it might be said, we find ourselves confronted by what is Ishmaelitish; but it has to be met by an administration which suits the Israel of God, which brings Christ's glory into evidence.

If the enemy knew how these things were going to work out he would leave us alone. Every local exercise and sorrow is divinely intended to work out Christ's glory in the local assemblies, and I believe the Lord would encourage us — for we all have to touch these things — by the thought that He has a special interest in us in relation to our local exercises, He carries us ever in His breastplate in relation to them.

What a comfort to know that the breastplate was never detached from the ephod. Christ as Priest before God bears all the local assemblies on His heart in relation to those particular features of His glory which local exercises are designed to bring out. All have their place in the universal setting, and go to make up the completeness of the administrative features which belong to the assemblies viewed universally. All are perfectly fitted together, like the stones in the breastplate, so as to be manifestly one complete whole; just as each tribe filled its own place in unity with the other eleven as encamping, or as moving in relation to the tabernacle of testimony. So that while each local assembly has its own exercise, all move together as one whole, and each forms an integral part of the whole. "The breastplate of judgment" would suggest that everything is to be judged from the standpoint of what is in the heart of Christ.

Divine judgment about everything is connected with the place the saints have in the affections of Christ. As to local exercises, there is something on the heart of Christ that He means to work out locally; now we want to get at what is on the heart of Christ — not merely what the brethren think or feel, but

what particular phase of Christ's glory does He mean to bring out in us through the varied local exercises. If we committed ourselves to these things we should learn the love of Christ in a way we have never learnt it before. There is a speciality of nearness to Christ brought about through local assembly exercises that we cannot get in any other way. Then we begin to realise things from the standpoint of Christ's glory; we are so apt to be governed by what is connected with ourselves; we often pursue, perhaps unconsciously, what stands connected with our own glory. But that is to perish; it belongs to what is Ishmaelitish; when we come to the exercises proper to the Israel of God we begin to think of Christ's glory. That glory is diversified; I believe that some feature of Christ's glory can come out locally at Crediton that is diverse from His glory as it comes out at Exmouth. It takes all the local assemblies to bring out this diversified glory of Christ; it comes out in detail in the local assemblies, worked out through their difficulties and exercises, and through the peculiar forms of pressure which they have to meet. Christ's glory is developed in the face of these things through His intercession. It is very encouraging. I believe the Lord would have us to be more definitely committed to the local assembly as "Christ's glory" than ever before. In the assemblies viewed according to God there is a setting forth of Christ's glory that corresponds with the precious stones in the breastplate. One local assembly is never to be detached in our minds from all the others.

There is a danger, on the one hand, that we may be occupied with what is universal without any exercise as to working things out locally, but, on the other hand, when we get the thought of what is local, we are apt to get too localised, and to lose the sense that we have to encamp and move with all the other tribes. But the square breastplate indicates universality; the Lord in Revelation a says, "all the assemblies shall know"; He has "all the assemblies" in view; all were set together round the tabernacle and in the breastplate.

Paul, in writing to the assembly of God in Corinth, is careful to remind them of the universal unity, for he addresses them as linked "*with all that in every place* call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ", 1 Corinthians 1: 2. And he says, "The cup of blessing which we bless ... The bread which we break ...

we, being many, are one loaf, one body; for we all partake of that one loaf", 1 Corinthians 10: 16, 17. The 'we' here is evidently the universal 'we'; the communion (or fellowship) is universal; all who partake of the one loaf "are one loaf, one body". This absolutely rules out the idea of independent assemblies. And he says further, "For also in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit", 1 Corinthians 12: 13. This

is clearly universal; the saints in Corinth were "Christ's body" (1 Corinthians 12: 27), and therefore they could not be regarded as independent of saints in other places who were also "Christ's body". This is not a voluntary association, or a *union* of independent assemblies, but an organic *unity* which, like the settings of gold which enclosed the stones of the breastplate, embraces all saints, in however many local assemblies they may be found. One could not, in the light of this, think that independent assemblies are of God any more than one could think that it was God's mind that the twelve tribes in Israel should be independent units. The saints are one body, and are called by God to one holy fellowship. So that the thought of independent local fellowship, or of any assembly action which can be limited in its bearing to the particular locality where it was taken, is entirely out of accord with the truth. No doubt "the assembly" in 1 Corinthians is generally the local assembly, but the assembly in its universal unity is also fully recognised; see chapter 10: 32; 12: 28; 15: 9.

Ques Why was Levi not in the breastplate?

CAC The tribe of Levi was not numbered for military service; their place was the charge and service of the tabernacle, and to carry it as the tabernacle of testimony through the wilderness; they are not included in the particular type which we are considering. Some of us think, perhaps, that it would be very nice if we had nothing to do but to come together to sing and praise and listen to precious ministry, without difficulties or local exercises; no complicated questions of right or wrong to solve! But it is the exercises connected with administration that are the making of local assemblies, for they come in in view of the divine system being worked out practically in a concrete form, and that involves conflict and difficulty and the solution of perplexing questions. But that is just what makes the breastplate so precious, because it is "the breastplate of judgment" and the Urim and Thummim are there. How good it is to consider that in our local difficulties there is an opportunity for enquiry. There is no hope of the local company that thinks it is competent to deal with its local exercises without enquiring of the Lord; such a company will soon be on the rocks; there is always necessity for enquiring. The wisest man does not know, of his own wisdom, how to act in cases of difficulty in the local assembly; it is very rarely that there is an exact precedent that we can safely follow. There must be a resorting to the Urim and Thummim, and to the breastplate of judgment, to the very heart of Christ; as we truly resort to Him, Christ's glory will be developed in a wonderful way in the local companies; it is worth going in for. There is a divine and spiritual administration, and nothing is of any value locally but that. Things are not to be settled by consent or agreement, but in the light of the breastplate; then things will be done

according to God, and the administration of the world to come will be anticipated in the assembly. Whatever judgment is reached will be a divine judgment; the way it is reached will be on spiritual lines through the local company enquiring of the Urim and Thummim.

Those who get the gain of local exercises are the ones who carry locally "Christ's glory". Such may sometimes be a small remnant. In the addresses to the seven assemblies the Lord refers in a particular way to the overcomer. Things are reached in spiritual power by overcoming; the church position is secured by overcomers; those who are not overcomers may be outwardly with the testimony, but they will never be an integral part of it. I believe the principles we have been considering, and the affectionate interest of the heart of Christ as set forth in the breastplate, are divine, and therefore indestructible and permanent. Let us flee from everything that is of an Ishmaelitish character and get into the true exercises of the Israel of God.

When the saints were exercised about the gentiles in Acts 15, how Christ's glory came out in Jerusalem! Perhaps everyone there was naturally prejudiced the other way, and would have brought the gentiles into legal bondage, but to impose a legal system on the gentiles would not have been "Christ's glory". When all arrived at a common judgment that the work of God among the gentiles should be left in spiritual liberty, then Christ's glory came out, that is how it should be in the assemblies; the fruit of every local exercise is that Christ's glory is seen in the saints locally and administratively. A care for poor and needy saints is part of the administration; 2 Corinthians 8. If we have to care for the poor it should be done in such a way that Christ's glory appears in it.

I believe these Old Testament scriptures have been held in reserve by the Spirit of God for the last days; their import is now brought out by the Spirit to be light and encouragement for those who are in difficult times. Many precious treasures have been locked up in the Scriptures, like the epistles to the seven assemblies, which were never understood in their prophetic character until the time arrived when it was needful that they should be understood. Many things in Scripture have been held in reserve; the typical teaching of the Old Testament is among the reserve stores of divine wisdom and love kept to encourage us in our exercises today. In the sense of this may we seek to answer locally to what the tribes are as seen in the breastplate!

THE GOLDEN LAMPS AND THE LOCAL ASSEMBLIES

Revelation 1:4-6; Revelation 1:9-20

CAC I thought we might profitably continue the subject as brought before us in Revelation 1, for no part of Scripture gives us a more definite impression of the Lord's concern about local assemblies. There is surely this to be gathered from this scripture as well as an extended prophetic bearing; in bringing it before us He intends to bring our thoughts and judgment and affections into correspondence with His own. This is the great gain of the first three chapters of the Revelation. The saints are viewed in this book as priests (chapter 1: 6), and the Lord would bring the whole company of priests into correspondence with His own thoughts. He would instruct us in the place which we have in His regard as 'golden lamps' in every locality where we are gathered together as confessing the truth of the assembly.

It conveys that the Lord would have the local assemblies to correspond in their public position with the way in which He Himself is known as the candlestick in the holy place. The public position of the tribes round the tabernacle was intended to correspond with the place they had in the breastplate; they had an inside place in the breastplate and their outside position was to correspond with it. The Lord is known as the candlestick in the holy place; He could hardly be spoken of as the candlestick when He was here, for we do not think of a candle or lamp when the sun is shining! When the Lord was here the Dayspring from on high visited men, so He spoke of His time here as "the day". It was a measured period — "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" — but there was a brief period when the light of day shone before men in the Person of the Son of God; whether the darkness could apprehend it or not, the light of day was there. Now the Lord being absent brings in the candlestick period; the Lord Jesus Christ as the candlestick is known in the holy place. The candlestick in the tabernacle was never seen except by priestly eyes, and that is the position of the Lord as the candlestick. The Revelation views the saints as priests, "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father", and as priests we are privileged to go into the holy place and view the candlestick in all its beauty and purity. All spiritual light is sustained in the holy place by Christ personally, and as priests we may go in and contemplate Him in that precious character. I have often thought that what would arrest the attention of a young priest when he entered the holy place for the first time would be that beautiful candlestick of pure gold illuminated by its seven lamps, for all the lamps threw their light on the candlestick itself. As priests we can go in to a place which is entirely beyond the ken of the natural man, and we can see

how the full perfection of spiritual light is maintained by Christ, and that He is Himself the great and blessed object on which all that light is concentrated in its holy purity. It is noticeable how the candlestick is spoken of more than once as "the pure candlestick", everything about it was pure; it was of pure gold, and the oil in its lamps was pure olive oil; it represents what is perfect and undimmed in Christ. The fulness and perfection of spiritual light is sustained in the holy place by Christ Himself through the night of His absence from the world. That is inside, and as priests we are privileged to go in to see it; then in our different localities we are called to correspond outside with what we have seen inside. It is very exercising to consider that in the Lord's regard we are "golden lamps" in the various places where we are set; the interest of Christ — His concern, His solicitude — is that we should have that character, nothing else will satisfy Him. It is no matter of indifference to Him whether the gold is bright or tarnished, or whether the light is radiant or dim.

Correspondence is brought about in the first place by accepting that according to the truth each local assembly is to have "golden lamp" character. It may be said that it was so at the beginning; the local assemblies were then golden lamps, but things are very different now! But the golden lamps show what local assemblies are according to the mind of the Lord. We may be sure that, if the local assemblies were golden lamps in His mind at the beginning, they are golden lamps in His mind at the end; He would not give up the divine thought. I believe the last chapter of this book intimates that there will be local assemblies at the end. "*I* Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies. *I* am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come".

It intimates that assemblies will be found here at the end, and that things will be testified there which will awaken the bridal response, "Come!"

I believe the consciousness of the ruin has been used by the enemy to give an impression that assembly thoughts are unrealisable. Whatever the ruin, we must hold that divine thoughts remain at the end what they were at the beginning, and it is the exercise of faith and love to be in accord with them; it is impossible for them to change. Divine thoughts remain, and what we have to do is to come back to them.

It is evident that the object of the Lord in addressing the assemblies in Revelation 2 and 3 was to bring about repentance and recovery. There is no suggestion in the seven epistles to the assemblies of His executing present judgment upon them; He speaks of what He will do if there is no repentance, but He ever speaks in the present with the object of producing repentance. Whatever has come in to dim the brightness of the golden lamps — and much

has come in — the Lord points out that these things are to be the subject of repentance; and true repentance would mean recovery, so that the Lord's thought right through was recovery. I believe He is working now, in the last days, in a special way to recover not only individual saints to Himself personally, but to recover the golden lamp character in local assemblies; perhaps outwardly in a small way in a remnant, but as we have often been told, a remnant is a bit of the original, a remnant has a distinctive place as a reserved portion for the Lord.

Bearing in mind that the saints are viewed in this book as priests it might well be expected that they would have spiritual sensibilities. If a person has spiritual sensibilities, what will be the effect upon him if the Lord as Son of man says, Such and such a thing does not please me? Will he not be sure to repent? Is not this to be expected, especially if He puts His estimate of things in writing? What we see here is that the Lord is so concerned about the local assemblies that He causes His servant John to *write* to them. He would put His moral judgment of them in writing so as to give the opportunity of sitting down quietly and looking at it, and going over it again and again. When there is a heart to consider what He says, and, having considered, to repent, there will be recovery. I do not say how many out of the mass will repent, but those who repent and are recovered become the true remnant; they carry in the last days the features of the first days, and the continuity of the work of God becomes manifest.

I do not want to stress a point, the evidence of which is outside Scripture, but it is of interest to know that it is generally supposed that the apostle John spent the last years of his life, and wrote his gospel and epistles in this very district where the seven assemblies were. The general tradition is that he spent his closing years in Ephesus, right in the midst of the Asiatic assemblies. If this was so, it would confirm the thought that the Lord intended his ministry to be a corrective of all that was amiss in the local assemblies. John has been called the Lord's reserve man, and his ministry would, through the working of God, restore the golden lamp character in local assemblies.

The Lord in Revelation 2 and 3 is communicating His moral judgment of local conditions to the assemblies; it is communicated in such a way as to exercise the heart and conscience. The Lord is saying, 'I approve of this and disapprove of that, and if you do not repent of what I disapprove I must judge it'. It is a communication from the Lord to our hearts and consciences in order that we may be confirmed in everything that pleases Him, and corrected in everything that displeases Him; the object in view being that the golden lamp character may be preserved or restored, and the local light be undimmed.

Rem I was thinking that apart from priestly features, and going into the holy place, there will not be a right appreciation of the public position.

CAC That is very important. If we have never been in to the holy place as priests we shall not have divine light on the public position. Hence the importance of being not only washed from our sins in the blood of Christ, but of being clothed in priestly attire, and therefore suitable to go into the holy place.

This book would start us with the precious thought that each Person in the Godhead is favourable to us; each divine Person regards the local assemblies most favourably (verses 4, 5). Whether it is God as such, the One who is and was and is to come, or the seven Spirits which are before His throne, or Jesus Christ the faithful witness, etc., each divine Person is favourable to local assemblies. It is as though the Lord would give us the very greatest encouragement at the outset. He would give all the local assemblies to know how favourable divine Persons are to them. It is as much as to say, I am going to tell John to write some very serious things to you; yet do not be discouraged, for divine Persons are favourable to you. We begin with that, and it is something to start with, and something, the sense of which we should never give up. Even "the seven Spirits which are before his throne" — the Spirit in that burning character — are favourable to us.

Rem It is a great thing to clothe the saints in our minds with these thoughts; sometimes we have a poor idea of the local assemblies.

CAC The fact is we usually begin at the wrong end! But we never begin anything rightly until we begin with God. A soul at the beginning of his history is never really right until he begins with God. That is why so many are in the dark as to the gospel; they work from themselves to God, from their need and ruin to God, but that is the wrong way about. In the gospel everything comes from God to man, and when we get to that side there is light. Things work in the same way as to the assembly. How are we going to get right assembly thoughts? Can we work up from the poverty, ignorance, and darkness of christians to the truth? We shall never get at it that way; we must begin with the greatness of divine thoughts, and when by the work of the Spirit they get into the saints' affections there will be something for God.

I do not know how far one can rightly apply the thought of a golden lamp to any local company that does not recognise the truth of the assembly, and seek to be in practical keeping with it. The local assemblies are seen here as having divine character; this is implied in their being golden lamps; whatever foreign element may be there dimming the light, the assemblies are still viewed as golden lamps. I believe most of us here have taken the ground locally of

having separated from what is unclean and unholy because we want to minister to the pleasure of the Lord; if that is not our object I do not know why we are walking together. I take it that through grace we wish to preserve in our different localities something that is in accord with the thought of a golden lamp; having this in view, we are thankful if the Lord can tell us that some things that we do please Him. And if He makes known to us that there is that amongst us which displeases Him we are thankful for that too, because we are glad to be corrected, so that we may come more into correspondence with His mind and have true golden lamp character. I trust that we truly covet to be in correspondence locally with the pleasure of Christ. If we do not walk together on that footing there is not much for Him in our walking together. It is no question merely of what we hold, or of standing for particular views, but we walk together as having a sincere desire to do so in accord with the truth of the assembly, and thus to correspond with the mind of Christ in regard to the local assembly.

If there is one overcomer in a place, no one can tell what the result will be. We are apt to look at the overcomer as only acquiring something for himself, but I think the result of overcoming would be that others get the benefit. Overcoming in the Old Testament was almost invariably for the benefit of others, and it was clearly so in the case of the Lord Himself. One overcomer often becomes a deliverer to many; David and his mighty men were overcomers, but all Israel got the benefit. An overcomer in a local assembly might effect deliverance for the whole assembly. J.N.D. was a great overcomer; he met in conflict a great deal that was opposed to the interests of Christ; we might say he slew many Philistines, but the whole church benefited, and thousands in a very direct way, who would perhaps never have had the energy to fight such battles for themselves. Of course there must be exercise on the part of all, and one must be something of an overcomer oneself to take up the benefit of what an overcomer secures, but it seems to me that the Lord values the overcomer as standing in a way that is really beneficial to the whole assembly.

Rem Paul said to Timothy, "Doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and those that hear thee".

CAC That is the principle. It could be established from many parts of Scripture that the benefit of overcoming extends, and is intended to extend, beyond the individual himself. If one brother or sister in a local assembly learns to judge something that is displeasing to the Lord, it will be brought to bear on others, and if there is any spiritual constitution locally the impression will pass from one to another until eventually everyone in the assembly will be brought to

judge this particular thing. The exercise, which begins with one passes on to others, and in result, as to that particular, a feature of the golden lamp is restored; that particular thing was obscuring the light, but as it is repented of and judged, the golden lamp character is restored. All the divine Persons give support to that kind of exercise. We find questions arise in the assemblies as to things which have been supposed to be all right, but the Lord intimates that they have not pleased Him, and the exercise which begins with a few, perhaps with one, passes to others and gradually extends locally and generally until all the assemblies are freed from an obscuring element. That is how golden lamp character is restored, and a way is found morally out of ruin and disorder. There has to be repentance in regard of all that is contrary to the Lord's mind, and that becomes the way of recovery.

We have to come back to what is seen in Revelation 1; the Lord as in the character of the Son of man is seen in the midst of the seven golden lamps. I have no doubt that there is a reference in this to Daniel 7:9,10; Daniel 7:13,14: "I beheld till thrones were set, and the Ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was flames of fire, and its wheels burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him ... . I saw in the night visions, and behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man, and he came up even to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed".

The consideration of this gives great force to the fact that the Lord is seen in the midst of the golden lamps in the character of the Son of man; indeed the characteristics of the Ancient of days and the Son of man seem to be blended in Him as thus seen; Daniel tells us that the Son of man reached unto the Ancient of days (chapter 7: 13, N.T. note). The Ancient of days is seen sitting in judgment; when that comes to pass we may be sure that everything will be dealt with according to the majesty of the One who sits; then the Son of man comes and is brought near as One who reaches to the Ancient of days — how wonderful! It implies that His judgment of everything is equal to that of Him who sits in judgment. None but One who was Himself a divine Person could reach to the Ancient of days; it is One who is eternally divine who now as like the Son of man stands and walks in the midst of the local assemblies.

That which belongs to the time when the judgment will be set and the books opened is brought into the present as regards the assemblies. The judgment of the Ancient of days and of the Son of man has begun, and goes on, amongst the assemblies. "The time of having the judgment begin from the house of God is come", 1 Peter 4: 17. But it is judgment in a moral sense with a view to repentance; any *actual* dealing with evil is in every case future. The Son of man makes known His mind so that everything contrary to His pleasure may be repented of, and the assemblies may practically answer to their character of golden lamps. So that the words written to each assembly are confirmatory as well as corrective, that is, they confirm all that is spiritual while they rebuke and correct all that is carnal.

We may be sure that He does not pass over anything that is displeasing to Him; nothing can be hidden from His eyes. But *why* this searching scrutiny? It is because He will have His saints as to their moral judgment of things in correspondence with Himself. He is concerned to have the local assemblies in correspondence with Himself. His judgment is to be their judgment; what He commends they are to commend; what He disapproves of they are to disapprove of that is clearly what is in view in Revelation 2 and 3; the Lord would have the local assemblies in accord with Himself.

Have you noticed that in Daniel 7: 9 we read: "I beheld till thrones were set, and the Ancient of days did sit"? Ponder that! We are not told that the Ancient of days sits to judge until there are thrones set for others also. We do not see those thrones occupied in Daniel 7, but they are set, as it were, in readiness to be occupied. God intends to have men identified with His own judgment, so that when He sits to judge they will sit on thrones too. The thrones are empty in Daniel 7, but they are filled in Revelation 4 and Revelation 5; the saints are seen there in correspondence with the throne, for they are on thrones, too. But we might gather from Revelation 1 - Revelation 3 that the Lord would have that to be anticipated in all the local assemblies, so that what He approves shall be approved there, and what He condemns shall be condemned there.

There is another beautiful touch in Daniel 7: 10, "Thousand thousands ministered unto him". I do not think this is a company of angels, but of men; men ministering to the Ancient of days as being in correspondence with His pleasure!

Think of the moral greatness of this. In that day of holy judgment there are seen thousand thousands who minister to the Ancient of days. Now the Lord seems to say, I want that to be anticipated in the local assemblies; nothing will satisfy Me but that; you are to minister to My pleasure by judging all that I

judge, and approving all that I approve. That would be a great ministry of the local assemblies to the Lord; it needs to be worked out in one detail after another until all obscuring elements are discerned and judged, and the golden lamp is purified so as to stand in its true character locally. Practically today there may be only a little company of saints, "a very small residue", perhaps a company of twelve in a place, accepting exercises from the Lord. Each one of them having fallen at His feet as dead, so that they realise that they can only stand in their local responsibility as taught of Himself and as drawing all from Himself. In that way something may be secured even yet that has locally the character of a golden lamp — something that corresponds publicly with the candlestick in the holy place.

I should like to say a word on the mystery in Revelation 1: 20; it is most instructive for exercised hearts. "The mystery of the seven stars which thou hast seen on my right hand, and the seven golden lamps". It would be worth our while to think it over. There is no mystery about church failure; it is written large in a thousand books of church history; but there is a mystery in the seven stars being seen on the right hand of the Son of man. He would have us to be acquainted with that mystery. He would have us to know that there is strength in His right hand to hold every responsible element in local assemblies, so that there may be complete correspondence with Himself. Every responsible element having been brought down to death at His feet, the strength of His right hand can be experienced; then the stars will find their right place in the hand of the Son of man. If held in that mighty hand, do you not think that they will be equal to responsibility? Before they could be in the right hand of the Son of man every one of them has learned that as to himself he must fall as dead at the feet of the Son of man. He has had to learn that all strength, support, and sufficiency flows out from Christ, all comes from there. So that strength for local assembly responsibilities is derived directly from the right hand of Christ; it is there for us, however little we may believe it,

or avail ourselves of it. As we draw from the fulness and sufficiency of Christ the golden lamp character can be restored in local assemblies; outwardly it may be in a very feeble kind of way, but there is nothing more precious to God than the thought of things being recovered in remnant character. To have things thus recovered at the end of a dispensation has a value that is perhaps greater in God's account than what was secured at the beginning of the dispensation. That God's precious original thoughts should be found at the end of the dispensation recovered in spiritual power in the face of departure and hostility of every kind, is a particular pleasure to His heart. It is open to us to minister to Him in according Him that pleasure, through the grace and power that are available for us.

THE RESOURCES OF THE LOCAL ASSEMBLIES

Revelation 1:4-6; Revelation 1:17-20

Although the Lord has favoured us with a good deal of light as to the assembly, we still need to be reminded of the special place which local assemblies have in His mind. We are all apt to be too individual, and to forget that the Lord is concerned about assemblies — local companies of saints. Such companies are of great interest to Him because this is the particular form which the work and testimony of God takes at the present time.

We may remember that Solomon is spoken of in Ecclesiastes as the Preacher, and in the margin of the New Translation the word 'preacher' is said to mean 'a former of assemblies'. The Lord would have us to consider Him in that light; it is the key to what took place in the early days of the church's history, and to what is taking place now. It is one of Christ's excellent designations that He is 'a former of assemblies'; when the voice of Christ is listened to, assemblies will be formed. It was so at the beginning, the speaking of Christ was heard, and the result was, not only that people were converted and brought into the blessing of the gospel, but local assemblies were formed; Christ was known to be the 'former of assemblies'. It was so at Corinth; Christ spoke in Paul (2 Corinthians 13: 3) and the result of His speaking was that an assembly was formed in that city, and it became a "golden lamp" — a vessel of spiritual light; that is the proper ideal of a local assembly.

The idea of local assemblies has very largely disappeared in Christendom. There are great national systems of religion, and sects, some with a little more light than others, but all constituted by influences other than the speaking of Christ. The local assembly viewed according to the mind of God is constituted by the speaking of Christ, and as a vessel of spiritual light it is spiritual in its constitution. We must begin with this idea; it does not do for us to derive our thoughts from the confused and disorderly state of Christendom; we must view this matter according to the divine conception; if that is before us it will steady our souls. It is a help to get the thought that according to God each local assembly is a vessel of spiritual light, and there is but that one vessel of spiritual light in a city. There was such a vessel in Corinth, and it had its counterpart in every other city and place where the Lord's name was called upon. Spiritual light was there, and it was nowhere else; outside was darkness. It should be our desire to be identified with that which is locally a vessel of spiritual light; that is what we want to look for. We can understand how Satan would desire to obscure such lights, and to introduce into local assemblies elements of darkness, but we may be sure that the Lord will never

give up the original divine thought, nor will He acquiesce in anything that is contrary to it.

We may learn from the verses read the kind of material of which the local assembly is formed; it is composed of persons who have the consciousness of the present love of Christ. In each local assembly you could hear such an utterance as this, "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father". Those who can say that have a spiritual constitution. The first feature of the local assembly is that it is a company of persons in the consciousness of the present love of Christ; then they can say, He "has washed us from our sins in his blood". He sets us together in the very place where we had been sinners, in the complete cleansing which His blood effects; all that made up our former history is washed away.

Then He "has ... made us a kingdom"; that intimates that we are not sinning now. Having been washed from our sins in His blood, He has made us a kingdom; He has constituted us a realm for God. To be a kingdom is a contrast to sinning; it is truly a blessed thing to be a realm for God. In every place where there is a local assembly there is a bit of territory which constitutes a divine realm. That is an important spiritual element, and, as we have said, if there is to be a local vessel of spiritual light, spiritual elements are essential to it. Anyone who loves God would delight to know that there is a bit of territory in the place where he lives that is an ordered realm for God, a realm where insubject or unruly elements are not tolerated, a kingdom — not a democracy, and that as having been subdued to God by His grace he forms part of it. That is how Christ forms assemblies. As these spiritual features are present — the consciousness of Christ's present love, of being washed from every stain of what pertained to our former history, and as constituted a kingdom — there is the establishment in a company of persons locally of what is morally suitable to God.

As we walk together locally as a kingdom, a realm for God, and as delivered from the lawlessness of sin, we are free to understand that Christ has made us priests to God and His Father. That is another element; we have spiritual constitution Godward; that is the thought of priests. It is not merely that we are spiritual enough to refuse the flesh and to be separate from the world — that would be involved in being a kingdom — but there is something further; He has made us priests to God; there is spirituality Godward. It is in taking account of these elements that we get a right and divine idea of the local assembly. When these elements are present there is a vessel of spiritual light locally, a number of persons who can stand in priestly service in the presence

of Christ's God and Father, having ability to serve intelligently in prayer and praise and worship. The speaking of Christ leads to our having a place as priests with His God and His Father, though believers are often slow to follow the leading of Christ in this respect. If we read the gospels we see how the speaking of Christ was all designed to lead men in their thoughts and affections to His God and Father. One great end for which He came was that men might be constituted priests to His God and Father.

In the local assembly the headship of Christ is recognised. There are many large and fine buildings where the name of Christ is mentioned, but what spiritual persons would look for is the recognition of the headship of Christ. Where it is recognised, there is something locally that has assembly character, and priestly service to His God and His Father will be found there. Where these elements are found there will be locally a vessel of spiritual light — a golden lamp. I trust that each one of us has a desire to be identified with what has that character, and to contribute to it as being an integral part of it; surely none of us would care to be an unattached unit! We desire to be thoroughly committed to what is of Christ and of God, to be part of the local vessel of spiritual light, not merely to be near it, but part of it. This is a real exercise for young people and for any who have not definitely taken their part and place in the local assembly; it is for them to consider whether they are not robbing the Lord of His due and God of His realm. As we learn from Scripture the divine thought as to local assemblies it becomes our privilege and responsibility to confess the truth practically by identifying ourselves with those who also confess it. If one is not thoroughly identified with the practical confession of the truth one misses a great deal of divine grace that can only be realised assembly-wise.

It was before me on this occasion to dwell on the immense resources that are available for support in local assemblies. It is evident that assemblies *can* be maintained as vessels of spiritual light; we see that in Smyrna and Philadelphia, both of which came under the eye of the Son of man without rebuke. Our dear brethren who do not recognise the local assembly, and who do not identify themselves with it, miss the peculiar grace which there is on the part of divine Persons for the assemblies; I believe it surpasses the grace that there is for individuals.

This comes out here very plainly in verse 4: "John to the seven assemblies which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth". Think of that grace! Favourableness on the

part of each Person in the Godhead, not here towards individuals, but flowing out upon the saints assembly-wise, for it is to "the seven assemblies". There is grace commensurate with the position, so that if much responsibility attaches to local assemblies as being golden lamps, there is corresponding grace.

God in His eternal unchangeableness — "Him who is, and who was, and who is to come"; God in His eternal faithfulness, is favourable to local assemblies. It is in writing to a local assembly that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1, "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord", and in chapter 10, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able to bear". It is the faithfulness of God as pledged to those who are walking in the fellowship that finds expression in the local assembly. The faithfulness of God is a very good 'ground of gathering'.

Then there is grace from "the seven Spirits which are before his throne". This is the Spirit of God not viewed as indwelling persons, or as the one Spirit baptising all saints in one body, but regarded in His relation to the throne. Perfection is there as intimated by the number seven, but seen figuratively as "lamps of fire, burning before the throne", chapter 4: 5. It suggests the maintenance in a judicial way of what corresponds with the throne. The seven Spirits are viewed objectively in the unlimited power that attaches to a divine Person to maintain what is due to the throne. The fact that grace and peace come to the local assemblies from the seven Spirits would assure us of divine help in matters relating to the throne, that is the rights of God. Questions do sometimes arise that are like an Amalekite hand on the throne; Exodus 17: 16. The seven Spirits of God would not tolerate any defiance of divine rights, but they are favourable to the assemblies as being resource for us in matters which require to be judged as being contrary to the throne. Then we read that the Lamb's eyes "are the seven Spirits of God which are sent into all the earth" (chapter 5: 6), so that in the seven Spirits of God there is a power of discernment which will soon search all the earth, but it is at the present time favourable to the assemblies as being divine resource for the distinguishing of good and evil. There is this in an unlimited way in the seven Spirits of God. The Spirit as indwelling the saints may be grieved or even quenched, and in that way the gain of His presence be largely missed, but no limitations can ever be put upon the seven Spirits of God; it is a comfort to know that the Son of man has the seven Spirits of God; chapter 3: 1. The perfection of spiritual power is with Him, whatever may be the state of the church. He has a power which can act sovereignly for the assemblies, whatever the conditions are here. I think we must recognise that there are sovereign and varied actions of the seven Spirits of God. I do not think the Spirit speaking to the assemblies is quite His action as in the body, but His action as at the disposal of Christ, and

as in accord with the throne. There are no limitations to what the seven Spirits can do, and Christ possesses them. There is always the plenitude and perfection of spiritual power with Him, but it is there for the good of the assemblies; there is with Him spiritual power commensurate with all assembly responsibility. If the golden lamps fail as vessels of spiritual light, He has the seven Spirits of God, as well as the seven stars; we can connect power with Him in an undiminished way, and He still has the seven stars. I take that to mean that there are still responsible elements which He can own and use; this gives a wonderful idea of resource. When we think of walking in local assemblies we become conscious of difficulties; if we do not see them at first we soon come up against them; so that it is of great importance that we should be furnished with the sense of resource. That marks Revelation 1; before we see the failure which comes under the eye of the Son of man in the local assemblies we get a view of most marvellous divine resources that are adequate to preserve local assemblies as vessels of undimmed spiritual light; that is surely a great comfort. God in His faithfulness, and the seven Spirits who are in perfect correspondence with His throne, are favourable to us in our local exercises, helping us to resist and overcome everything that is contrary to the throne. The Holy Spirit as the seven Spirits before the throne would help us to resist everything that is contrary to what we are as "a kingdom", everything that savours of insubjection; everything which does not belong to vessels of spiritual light.

Then lastly, "and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth". This brings together what He was, what He is, and what He will be, and shows that in every character He is favourable to the local assemblies. There is grace for us according to all that Jesus Christ was as "the faithful witness"; there was no failure there, no obscuring element, nothing that came short in any way of the full testimony that God would have to be rendered. Then as "first-born from the dead" we see Him as pre-eminent in resurrection; all the power of resurrection is known in Him from whom grace and peace come to us; that power is equal to anything. As "prince of the kings of the earth" He will order all for the pleasure and glory of God in a coming day. These varied titles are brought in to show how rich is the fund of grace that can be drawn upon. There is no need to be discouraged if we meet with difficulties; they are not insurmountable if compared with the resources which are available. We have to notice, as was remarked before, that the Lord has preserved us from thinking that assemblies in local responsibility will always be a failure, because He has shown us that out of seven assemblies there are two concerning which He has no word of rebuke; showing that those are contemplated who utilise divine resources and

are thus preserved from failure. We should covet to be without rebuke, that when the Lord comes in and looks around the local assembly He might find us so sustained by divine resources that He has no need to rebuke.

That leads me, finally, to say a little about the end of chapter 1, where the Lord brings out what a resource He is. John saw the Son of man in His majestic glory, and he says, "I fell at his feet as dead". John had long before this heard the Lord's words — I have no doubt they sank deeply into his heart — "without me ye can do nothing"; but now John comes to the experimental realisation of it, and we all have to come to it, especially as to our assembly exercises. All this has in view assembly exercises. We have to learn experimentally that without Him we can do nothing. Nothing will pass the divine scrutiny except what has its source in Himself. It is only thus that there can truly be a golden lamp; a vessel of spiritual light must derive everything from Christ; there cannot be a contribution from nature or the flesh. John was made to realise that he must derive everything from Christ.

Then, "he laid his right hand upon me" — that is power. The Lord is ever ready to lay His right hand upon us. I believe it requires some measure of spiritual vitality to fall at His feet as dead; there must be a certain sensitiveness to divine impressions. If we realised that the judgment of the Ancient of days had actually come into the present in regard of the assemblies the result would be that we should at once be prepared to admit that nothing will stand that judgment but what is derived from Christ. Then He puts His right hand on us, and where the right hand of the Son of man comes there is power. He speaks next of what there is in Himself; "Fear not; *I* am the first and the last"; that is as much as to say, 'John, you must begin and end with Me'; then, "and the living one"; I understand that to convey that He is the source of life for us. "The living one" is the gospel of John in three words. Then "I became dead"; He had to go that way in order that we might live in Him, but He adds, "behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades". He has the key in chapter 3 to open the door to let us in to all the treasuries of precious things, but here He has the keys of death and hades to liberate us from everything that belongs to the domain of death, or to the evil powers of the invisible world; in short, from everything that is hostile to Himself and to God.

I believe the Lord would give us a great sense of the wonderful resources there are in Him even for the last days. This comes out in His addresses to the last three assemblies; the addresses to the first four — omitting Smyrna — present the Lord in the character in which John saw Him in chapter 1 — a character calculated to produce deep exercise and searchings of heart. But to

the last three assemblies He presents Himself as having new features and characteristics which are of the nature of divine resource. He says to Sardis that He has the seven Spirits of God; to Philadelphia that He has the key of David; to Laodicea that He is the Amen, the beginning of the creation of God. These are new features not mentioned before, and they bring out what there is in Him as resource for the local assemblies. We could not bear to think of the judgment of the Son of man if we did not know that there is adequate resource to enable us to fulfil our local responsibility assembly-wise. We need not be discouraged, but rather greatly comforted, as we get an increased sense of the profound interest of divine Persons in our walking together in local assemblies. We have to learn that Christ must be the source of everything for us; we cannot, apart from Him, furnish anything that is requisite to meet with His approval. The assemblies need something more than the sense of responsibility if they are to answer to their place as golden lamps. Conscience must be awakened, surely, but that leads to nothing positive unless the heart is led to find its unfailing resource in the very One who sheds holy light on the conditions that are before Him. Responsibility can only be taken up in the strength of His right hand; there is produced a very real sense in the soul that we need Him if there is to be anything that corresponds with a golden lamp; this leads to calling on the Lord out of a pure heart; 2 Timothy 2: 22. Everything that we need is there for us in Him if we will avail ourselves of it, so that we need not give up the thought of being golden lamps, however great may be the general obscuration.

THE BUILDING OF THE WALL, NEHEMIAH 1

Nehemiah 1

It is remarkable that we have the house built and the service of God set up in Ezra before we come to the thought of the city and the wall which is largely developed in Nehemiah. The first thing in the mind of God is how we approach Him. Hence Ezra is more occupied with what is internal; he speaks of the altar, the house and the service; it is more an internal view of things. Nehemiah is occupied with what is external. The city and the wall refer to the public position; the service of the altar and house is to be safeguarded and preserved. There is a need for the city and the wall.

The first thing in the mind of God is how He is approached. The thought of privilege in relation to God must come first in the mind of God, although it may not in our minds. So in Exodus the instruction as to the tabernacle begins with the ark, and then goes on to what was enshrined in it. We must realise that approach to God and the service of God are great things in the mind of God and then we can take up what is external — the principles of fellowship divinely administered in the assembly. That is necessary if things are to be protected and preserved. Nehemiah gives that side of things; the city and the wall represent what is public. Without the city and the wall the public position is one of affliction and reproach, and that is very much the position in the Christian profession today. In the ways of God there is a recovering of things in these last days. There was not much thought of the city and the wall when the saints began to break bread; they thought almost entirely of the Lord's supper as the privilege of all believers. The test comes when these things have to be protected. When the exercise began among the brethren as to assembly principles and administration, many who were apparently going on well became adversaries.

We find in this chapter that Nehemiah was brought to deep concern because of what he heard of the affliction and reproach of God's people. The wall was in ruins and the gates burned with fire; it filled him with sorrow. That is the first thing. Reproach lay on the people of God that was not the reproach of Christ. *We* have to feel that great reproach rests on the people of God today because of their unfaithfulness. Nehemiah's concern was that the reproach might be taken away. We must differentiate between the reproach of Christ and this kind of reproach. The reproach of Christ is reproach in the eyes of the world, not the reproach spoken of here which is reproach under the eye of God. Those who are faithful bear the reproach of Christ before the world; those who are unfaithful bear reproach under the eyes of God. It is the divine

way of recovery that we should be sensitive as to everything that comes on our consciences as not being of God. The condition of the people of God generally, even true christians, is one of great reproach in the eyes of heaven. We have to take up the exercise of it. It is easy to see how true it is of the christian profession, for many things there have no authority or support in Scripture at all; they are a reproach under the eye of God. It arises from the fact that the true principles of christian fellowship have been broken down, and assembly administration has been destroyed, so that we speak of the ruin. J.N.D. was greatly criticised and denounced because he spoke of the ruin, but there it is; what does not answer to the mind of God is a state of ruin. God's intention is that at the end there is to be exercise as to it and a turning to God and to the Lord in prayer and then to the light of Scripture.

Three great outstanding principles come out in this chapter:

(1) Deep exercises as to the ruin.

(2) Prayer.

(3) The Scriptures turned to as affording great confidence notwithstanding all that has taken place.

That is the way of recovery for any of us. God said that, if they repented and turned to Him, He would bring them back to the place where He had set His name even if they had been scattered to the uttermost part of the heavens. It is most encouraging. We have to feel now what was felt at Pentecost. They felt the failure of Israel, but they had not the sorrow of feeling how the assembly had failed. *We* must take up the exercise that the assembly in its public setting is the greatest failure there is in the whole history of the world. Therefore there is nothing for it but to seek the Lord and pray. There is everything in the Lord to be counted on in the darkest day and the time of greatest ruin. The Lord remains. When we come to prayer we are at no disadvantage; we are as well off as they were at Pentecost. Before Pentecost we find they spent ten days in prayer; that is a provision as open to us as it was to them. There is no one to tell us that we cannot pray. At the end of Acts 2 we find that they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and prayers. It is very beautiful to see that those things are as open to us today as they were then — the apostle's teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers — they are as much within our reach now as they were in Acts 2. It is very comforting and encouraging. We have to get back to what the assembly began with, to have our whole resource in God and in the Lord and in the Spirit. The assembly at Corinth and those meeting all over the world at that time were calling on the name of the Lord. We can still do that, and when we do so we have reached the source of

everything. The Lord is as equal to the darkest day as to the brightest day. I believe the giving up of prayer is the first mark of spiritual decline. People give up private prayer, and then household prayer, and everything for God is over. We have to get back to this great basic fact that, if we are to be anything at all for the Lord, we must be men and women of prayer and feel things more than we do. We get so hardened. Nehemiah was a man of deep exercise; he realised that the wall was in ruins and the gates burned and the people in affliction and reproach, and he turns to God. We have to go the same way; there is no other way of recovery if we want to stand in assembly truth.

If you have the wall, you have things secured. That is the point of teaching in this book, to be able to set up the true principles of the assembly in a day of ruin, principles of divine administration not to be seen in the religious world. It was very encouraging to Nehemiah that Jehovah had said that if the people turned to Him He would bring them back to the place where He had set His name. The Lord will never see His name in unholy conditions. A godly man never leaves himself out when he confesses sins. If I have to speak to the Lord about something wrong in someone else, He always turns me back on myself. It is necessary that we should bring ourselves into this matter. We cannot stand outside the ruin and reproach of the christian profession as spectators; we are all part of it. We are only out of the ruin as standing in the thoughts of God, and when we stand there we have no very flattering estimate of ourselves. We need to be marked by these features: by feeling everything that is a reproach on the people of God, and then turning to the Lord as a resource, calling on the Lord out of a pure heart. We must be exercised as to this, to be standing in the truth of the assembly and the principles of christian fellowship, we must be thoroughly identified with them and completely separated from things around us.

Paul speaks to Timothy of "those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart", 2 Timothy 2: 22. "A pure heart" means that there is nothing artificial or hypocritical about us, that we have done with the Pharisee. We are all naturally well-bred Pharisees and we have to get rid of that and have a pure heart. Nehemiah is the line of spiritual exercise for us all. We must not rest on the fact that we have come to outward separation; we must be set to be in the reality of it so that heaven recognises that we call on the Lord out of a pure heart. The Psalms give a good idea of a pure heart. The psalmist confesses his own sins and the sins of God's people; he has a pure heart. No one has a pure heart that does not judge himself. When we are occupied with what is of God, we go on with it and judge all the ruin in the light of what is positively of God. What we find constantly in the Psalms is confession of sin and consciousness of integrity, which go together. Nehemiah takes account of

God as keeping covenant and mercy to them that love Him and keep His commandments. He reckoned that there were such persons, so he says in his prayer, "Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying ... if ye return to me, and keep my commandments ... will I gather them ... unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there" (verses 8, 9). That is what he builds on. There will always be those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart and we want to move along with those people. Nehemiah does not pray that the people may return, but he takes for granted that there will be those who love God and keep His commandments, so he says, "let now thine ear be attentive ... to the prayer of thy servants who delight to fear thy name" (verse 11). He takes for granted that there was a company marked by these desires and exercises. So the inward state of our hearts is the great thing.

There was a long interval between the end of Ezra and this chapter showing that when God recovers His work He does not do everything at once. He carries it on by progressive stages. We have seen that in the last hundred years. The Lord did not bring out everything at first; there was not much thought about principles or administration at the beginning; those exercises gradually developed as the need arose for maintaining separation and for safeguarding the precious things. So the building of the wall is a further exercise, and a constant one to keep up separation as to all those things that are not of God. The principle of separation must be maintained; it is a constant exercise. Nehemiah has the sense too that the matter will depend on the favour of the king. The king was God's representative in this matter. It shows that the king is one who represents a power which God can make of service to His people and testimony. Artaxerxes was not on the same line as Cyrus. Cyrus was raised up by God to build the house and thus was a type of Christ. Artaxerxes was on a lower line, for he was made favourable by observing the condition of Nehemiah. That is the setting. Nehemiah so conducted himself before the king that, when the time came, the king was disposed to be favourable to him. That is one ground on which we might expect the powers that be to be favourable; we are to be marked by subjection. Nehemiah commended himself to Artaxerxes; that is one aspect of the position. We see in certain parts of the world that the powers of government are favourable to what is of God. In those countries where the testimony has had its place we find the powers that be are generally favourable, but where the testimony has had no place the powers are adverse and persecuting. God provides for the protection of His work, and we ought to value the powers that are favourable. Paul says that they are God's ministers

to us for good. It is a great thing to see that. Every policeman and soldier is a servant of God, and in that sense he serves the testimony.

THE BUILDING OF THE WALL, NEHEMIAH 2

Nehemiah 2

The exercise of Nehemiah was that the city and its walls might be built. He was conscious that he was a man under authority and that he must not move without authority. It would seem that the king of Persia in this book is viewed as representing divine authority; he had been set up by God.

The lesson for us would be that in a day of ruin, when we feel things are broken down and in ruins, we should desire to do something to remedy the state of things for God's advantage and the advantage of His people. We must be careful to act as those who have authority for what they do.

All authority is of God; so today the authorities that exist are not the world, they are of God. We have to distinguish between the world, which is made up of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and the authorities which are of God. The object for which authority is exercised is to repress evil. The government of God is not the world; there is something on earth which is of God. All government is representative of God, all kings and judges; they are for the punishment of evil-doers and the praise of those that do well, and so they represent God. Therefore we respect all authority. We have to distinguish between the world as an evil system and the government of God in it by means of kings, rulers, and magistrates. What would the world be without government? If there were no police or prisons, it would be impossible for God's creatures to live in it under present conditions. God maintains in government a condition of things that is favourable to all His creatures, and of course to His people. It is important to recognise that all authority is of God. To understand the teaching of this chapter we have to look at it in this light. Nehemiah was dependent on the king for his commission and the supply of what he needed for building the city. He acts as a man under authority; we must be careful that we have authority for what we do. There is a danger of losing sight of that and looking on the authorities of the world as though they belonged to the world morally, for they do not. Positionally the king is representative of God as exercising government for the restraint of evil and the furthering of what is good.

There is a suggestion here of Nehemiah being in a position in which he could minister to the joy of the king. If we apply it spiritually, I thought that was the condition necessary if we are to get support and direction and supply in relation to eradicating the ruin that exists. We must be marked by this feature of offering pleasure to God in our own personal walk and deportment. Paul says to Timothy, 'Study to show thyself approved of God, a vessel to honour,

acceptable to the master'. That is important. It made Nehemiah acceptable to the king and he got all his requests. We should be individually exercised to be pleasing to God. We cannot get light as to the state of ruin around, or as to what can be done to remedy it, if we are not personally pleasing to God.

Then we find that Nehemiah has a new exercise. He had never been sad before. He heard from these brethren who came from Jerusalem about the dreadful state there and it awakened a new exercise in his soul and made him a sad man. It is good when an exercise begins in our hearts as to the state of things in the christian profession. It is an exercise that God would give us to feel, that the public christian profession is one of great reproach to God; the walls are broken down and the gates burned with fire. The holy separation which marked the people of God is broken down and the administration which rightly marked the assembly is burned with fire. We often speak of our joys and happiness, but God is looking that we should be sad. As it says of Timothy, "remembering thy tears"; that is a very important side of things. Do we feel for God as to the broken state of things? If we do not feel like that, we shall not be very serviceable in building the city and wall. Nehemiah is instruction for us as to how something can be built up for God and the good of His people in a day of ruin. The first thing is to think of God and the reproach that rests on God by reason of the state of things among those who profess to be His people.

There were others besides Nehemiah "who delight to fear thy name". It will always be so; any true spiritual exercise will never be confined to one person. Paul had Timothy and others who were a comfort to him. In the darkest day there will always be a company sharing the same exercises. Even Jeremiah was not left alone; there were those who befriended him.

Nehemiah moved in his own exercises and that is important for us. We are so apt to move like a flock of sheep, all going one way without much exercise. Individual exercises are most important in a day of ruin. I ought not to have to be supported by the faith of others. This great work required all hands to help it on. As to matters of fellowship they require all hands. Nobody is let off; each one has to be true to this principle of fellowship. In the next chapter each one builds his bit, all going together. God does not limit His work to one individual. It would not be suitable in the assembly for God to give exercise to only one. Any spiritual exercise is shared by all those in the current of the Spirit; all move together.

While Nehemiah was sad as to the state of things at Jerusalem, he did not settle down to that. There are a vast number of christians today who are sad and grieved by what they see and hear, but they leave it at that and just go

on, whereas Nehemiah was a man of action. His request to the king was, "If it please the king ... that thou wouldest send me to Judah ... that I may build it" (verse 5). He was not content to be a silent, sorrowful man because of what he had heard, but he wanted to move in the matter. There were the walls to be built and the gates set up and he was a man of action. It ought to affect us much that the principles of fellowship and the truth of the assembly and its administration can be set up again, in principle, even in a day of ruin. That is the teaching of Nehemiah.

In Matthew 18 the Lord speaks of the assembly. He says, "if *two* of you". He attaches the same provision and power to two as He did to the assembly. It shows that the principles of the assembly can be worked out if necessary by two. They could not be worked out by one; at least two are necessary. "Two of you" means two who have assembly exercises and light. You can have anything you ask for. "Where two or three are gathered ... to my name, there am I in the midst of them". If He is there, what more do we want? The assembly in its brightest day had nothing greater than the presence of the Son of God. All the principles of the assembly can be enjoyed today in spite of the ruin and failure. It is people like Nehemiah, who are really concerned about matters, that understand these things. In 2 Timothy we find the kind of material that can be used in building; we cannot build without material. If we read 2 Timothy carefully we shall see the sort of material that is useful for God's building operations. God has to provide it and it is provided by His work in the souls of His people. It speaks of the king first; there is material which the king has at his disposal needed to build the city and walls. 2 Timothy speaks of faithful men. Paul exhorts Timothy to pass on what he had to faithful men. The first thing to look for in connection with assembly material is faithfulness. I look with confidence on a man or woman who is faithful to the light he or she has; it is a bit that God can use. God provides suitable material. Timothy largely describes the kind of material suitable for God to use in a day of ruin:

faithful men; those who live piously in Christ Jesus; those who follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. All that is fine timber; they are those who are "in Christ Jesus", words occurring seven times in 2 Timothy. That is the kind of material for the house, not the man after the flesh but the man in Christ Jesus. Paul writes in 2 Timothy, "according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus". He has the thought of living material, as Peter speaks of living stones. God has found some material even in these last days; He has found a few hearts who grieve over the ruin of the assembly and seek to build and set up divine principles on

the ancient foundation and to establish the truth of separation. There are a goodly number of hearts set on these things.

Then there was opposition. Any move made in consideration for God and the welfare of His people is sure to find Sanballats and Tobijahs who grieve over it. It is in 2 Timothy that Paul refers to persons who opposed — Hymenaeus, Philetus and Alexander; they opposed the ministry. They may have been prominent men amongst the brethren, but adversaries of the work of God. Tobijah had a link with the people of God; he was an Ammonite, descended from Lot, but he turned out to be an enemy all through. It is interesting to see that, although there was so much opposition and difficulty put in the way, yet the work went on to completion.

We have an important exercise brought before us in this chapter. People surveying the state of ruin cannot expect to have the help of God unless they understand what the need really is. So Nehemiah's first exercise after arriving at Jerusalem was to see what the state of things really was; this is an exercise very important for us all, emphasising the importance of private exercise with God. None of us can move publicly beyond the measure of our private exercise with God. If we are true we shall accept that. It is like Paul's three years in Arabia, where we do not read of his doing anything. There is no word of his preaching there; he is going through things in private and personal exercise. If our public action goes beyond our private and secret exercise, it is sure to come to nothing. We are apt to be in a hurry to do what we see to be right and let the public movement go beyond our measure of private exercise and that leads to failure. There was not the measure of spiritual exercise with the rulers that there was with Nehemiah. It is always distracting to take counsel with those less spiritual than ourselves. When people decline, they seek the company of those inferior, and that accelerates departure; we should seek the company of people more spiritual than ourselves. See how the Philippians clung to Paul; he could speak of their fellowship from the first day to now. Others turned away from him, but *they* clung to him, and it was their salvation. We all have the opportunity of keeping company with the best saints and servants the Lord ever had. We should value things secretly so that we avail ourselves of what there is for us. First of all there are the Scriptures; there are men of God, Peter, Paul and John, waiting on us and ready to give their company at any time. What is to hinder me from being a close companion of Peter or Paul or John? Let us give our minds *wholly* to the ministry, so that we get on. We do not keep good company when alone; we want to keep in company with the blessed servants of God in our private life.

Nehemiah, in going to take account of the ruin, goes by night; it is a private matter. He goes out by the valley-gate; that is the way to go to take account of the ruin. The valley-gate suggests going out in a lowly spirit. When Paul had to survey the ruin at Corinth he says, "out of much tribulation and distress of heart I wrote to you with many tears" — he went out by the valley-gate. That is the only way we can take account of the state of ruin — in the spirit of tears, not in a censorious spirit. The Lord puts His people through exercises of that kind. When the Lord was going to send a solemn message to the assemblies by His servant John, He put John through tremendous exercise. John says, "when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead". John needed that exercise; he went out by the valley-gate. That is the only spirit in a day of ruin that will answer the divine purpose. Nehemiah went back by the valley-gate, too; that is suggestive of that lowly spirit that feels things with God. When he comes to think of sources of refreshment that were once available and are not now, he feels it intensely. "And I went out by night by the valley-gate, even toward the jackal-fountain, and to the dung-gate". The jackal-fountain would seem to speak of what is evil, apparently a source of refreshment, but the power of evil in it. The Lord makes us acquainted with the evil teaching that has found its place in the ruin of the assembly publicly; He would have us in a lowly spirit to take account of the evil teaching. We do not need to read bad books to know what the evil is, for we learn of it from the Scriptures. Scripture speaks of the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes and of Balaam, and the woman Jezebel. The Lord calls attention to the sources of evil teaching; none have arisen or will arise that are not in Scripture. Some say today that there is no resurrection from the dead, but we do not need to read their books; Scripture reveals all bad teaching. We read that there are already many antichrists; so we know about the evil teaching that has come into the assembly. All this is connected in my mind with the dragon well or jackal-fountain. We are warned of every kind of evil that will come in. We are not groping in the dark as to evil.

Then the dung-gate has most important instruction. It is the ruin of the dung-gate that has been so disastrous in the history of the assembly. The dung-gate speaks of the refusal of everything that would be a gain to us according to the flesh. Paul tells us in Philippians of what wonderful things he had to his credit as a man in the flesh and yet they all went out by the dung-gate; he counted them all filth. It was not wickedness, but his religion and the advantages he possessed as a good Jew; they went out by the dung-gate. The dung-gate was very soon burned with fire in the history of the assembly. If we are going to take account of the ruin we must do so first as it applies to ourselves. Have we known what it was to make use of the dung-gate? The flesh in its religion

is filth. It is according to the excellence of the knowledge of Christ that Paul measures things. There is a volume of instruction in these things, and if we do not work them out for ourselves in secret exercise we shall not be in the mind of God at the present time.

Then there is the fountain-gate and the king's garden; there is a beautiful spiritual suggestion there. The fountain-gate is a most interesting place, for it brings in the thought of the Spirit. In the next chapter we read, in verse 15, "And the fountain-gate repaired Shallun the son of Colhozeh, the chief of the district of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up its doors, its locks and its bars, and the wall of the pool of Shelah by the king's garden, and to the stairs that go down from the city of David". That all stands connected with the fountain-gate, and is full of spiritual suggestions. God complained of His people through Isaiah that they refused Siloam's waters that flowed softly. Shelah, or Siloam, referred to what God sent in grace. What He sent by the prophet Isaiah was the promise of Immanuel. To get any spiritual vision we have to come to Siloam. The fountain-gate is the spiritual climax of the next chapter. We shall see there that as the different gates were built, they lead up to the fountain-gate as a climax. The next chapter is of the deepest interest, for the only way to the city is by the gates and I hope we all want to go in. We are told that those who wash their robes have the *right* to go in, and there is no other way but by the gates.

In this night exercise of Nehemiah's, he was allowed to see the ruin; when he comes to the fountain-gate there was no way to pass. The great spiritual refreshment properly belonging to the presence of the Spirit was not available.

Then the king's pool is a beautiful suggestion. It turns us to the Song of Songs and shows that when the Spirit of God has His way He brings fruit into the garden. He can come in and eat His pleasant fruits. In a day of ruin God calls attention to the great principle attaching to the assembly — love. We live in the enjoyment of all the blessings proper to the assembly; if not we are in a state of ruin.

The principal exercise in Nehemiah's case was as to Jerusalem, and we have to go through this exercise. God has put it in inspired words to indicate to us that there is no other way to the assembly in a day of ruin. It works out collectively in the next chapter, but the individual must come first. This night exercise is most important. We ought not to set these things aside as though meaningless. All that is connected with the Spirit and the king's garden and the stairs that go down from the city of David is full of spiritual suggestion. It speaks of what is to be enjoyed by saints of the assembly. It raises the question with every one of us, Am I sharing with the brethren in the

enjoyment of these precious things? If not, I am in a state of ruin, and the sooner I go to God about it the better. To take account of the ruin is the first thing, but we must not stop there; it leads to Nehemiah calling the attention of others to it, "Ye see the distress that we are in ... and they strengthened their hands for the good work", chapter 2: 17, 18. God gives His people courage to set up principles that have been broken down; not in our case to restore the assembly, but to set up in our souls and associations principles that belong to the assembly. When we move on those lines the hand of God will be upon us.

Sanballat and Tobijah set forth the opposition of the flesh to all that is of God. They were adversaries; Nehemiah says to them, "Ye have no portion, nor right, or memorial in Jerusalem". They had nothing to do with the building of God's city; they were opposed to it. They tried to draw Nehemiah into fellowship with them. There are powers and influences at work today in opposition to what God is doing and Satan will see to it that influence is brought to bear in opposition to what God is doing. What is going on at this point is that the people are encouraged to rise up and build, and they strengthened their hands for the good work. Notwithstanding the ruin it is an encouraging thought that the hand of God is on the man who feels the ruin. There is ability to do things; there is something for every hand to do. This work of building the wall and setting up the gates is going on; there is some part in that work for each one of us. Heaven is with us in maintaining principles of separation from the world which marked the assembly at the beginning. Each one of us has to put our hands to that work. We either build up principles which are of God, or pull them down; that is obvious to each of us. Something goes on in the souls of the saints, for the building is now done there, and in the next chapter all are viewed as having part in it. Some did not put their hands to the work, but, speaking generally, all did. In the fellowship we all put our hands to it; we are definitely committed to the working out of what is of God.

THE BUILDING OF THE WALL, NEHEMIAH 3

Nehemiah 3:1-13

This chapter brings before us God's thought to have a city here; God is Himself the great city builder. There is a marked contrast to the first city built. Satan seems to have been allowed in the actual course of events in this world to anticipate God. The thought of a city was in the mind of God, but it made its first appearance in Satan's world. The thought of kings was in the mind of God, but they first made their appearance in the world as under Satan's ordering. God will have a wonderful city, and it would appear that, while the cities of the nations are still standing in their greatness and glory, God would introduce the features of His city. There is one description of the saints which perhaps we do not dwell upon as much as other descriptions and that is that they are fellow-citizens, showing that the city idea has place now.

The city has its own character and constitution. The thought suggested in the scripture before us particularly is that it has a wall and gates. In a sense it is self-contained, unique in its character as distinguished from all around it. That is marked in the closing verses of the Bible. We see the difference between what is within and without. Purity and blessedness are within the city, and without are dogs and every kind of evil. Those who have washed their robes have the right to go through the gates into the city.

We have seen that Nehemiah went out by night to survey the ruin in secret exercise with God — he surveyed the conditions. We should go out with holy exercise to see the terrible ruin, but we should not be content to leave it at that. Many pious persons are conscious of the ruin and mourn over false teaching and worldliness, the sectarian character and spirit that has come into display, but they do not arise to build. Nehemiah had not only pious sentiments but he was a man of action; divine thoughts were brought into some concrete expression. All this fits into 2 Timothy, where we are exhorted to follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It is very constructive. It is not mere separation from what is wrong — that in itself is too negative to be pleasing to God; we must have the constructive side.

The gates set forth symbolically certain great principles which always mark what is of God as here in the world and apart from which there is no entrance into the city. The sheep-gate comes first. It is of primary importance that we should apprehend the thought of divine election as taught by John. There are certain persons whom the Lord recognises as His own sheep; it is entirely a matter of divine election. Viewed as sheep we belonged to the Father before

we belonged to the Son. This is not our first apprehension, but it is thus presented in John. John 10 is the great unfolding of what stands connected with the sheep-gate. The Lord said to the Father in chapter 17, "they were thine, and thou gavest them me". To have an intelligent part in the city we must apprehend what the saints are according to sovereignty, according to divine calling; otherwise there will be no proper measure of the character of the separation becoming to the people of God. Our right conception of separation depends on our seeing that it is a matter of God's election. If we apprehend that the Father claimed us in His purpose to give us to Christ, and that we are of value to the Father and Son, what a separating effect it will have! We need to have built up in our souls the truth of divine sovereignty, through which we have been made Christ's sheep and have life eternal. "I and my Father are one", means that They are one in mind and purpose in regard to the sheep. What a holy scene we are brought to! This is the only gate built by the priests. The thought of locks and bars does not enter into the thought of the flock, and that is the spiritual reason why they are not mentioned. The flock is not held by restraint or by a fold, but by the attraction of the Shepherd. He has knowledge of all the sheep; they hear His voice and follow Him. He has made Himself divinely known to the sheep and He gives them life eternal. That is the thought of what the sheep are as a divine conception. The Lord does not say that the sheep ought to hear His voice; He speaks of the thing in its divine character. If I see that, I pray that it may be true of me.

We shall not enter intelligently into the character of the city in its present position apart from apprehending this. It is a priestly and hallowed matter. The things belonging to the Father and Son are holy. We have to move into the region of the Father and Son to get a proper apprehension of the one flock that belongs to the one Shepherd. The thought of the flock is one of those thoughts which are attached in common to Israel and to the saints of the assembly. There are many thoughts connected with Israel and with the assembly; for instance, the house of God, the kingdom, the temple, and the flock, are all thoughts that appear in the Old Testament. They are not wholly new thoughts, but they take an entirely new character. The thought of being Jehovah's flock suggests the divine shepherd-care which was true of saints in Old Testament times. He led Israel like a flock through the wilderness. It was as precious and real to faith in Israel as it is in the saints of the assembly. I do not think God allows any of His thoughts to lapse; they are carried on in a spiritual way in the assembly. The kingdom, the house, and the flock, were all attached to Israel, and they are now brought in in a spiritual way. We are now not only His brethren morally but we are His brethren spiritually as having a place with His Father and God. We start with a conception purely divine. We

do not, in the actual history of our souls, begin with that, but God gives us a picture of things that will help us. The difference between being before and after Christ is immense. There was no greater born of women than John the baptist, yet a little one in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. The ministry of the apostle John was largely on this line. He speaks of the saints as born of God, a sovereign action of God. It is a divine and holy action which imprints a divine character. He that is born of God cannot sin; it shows the holy character. In the sense of John 10 the Lord does not lay down His life for every one; He lays down His life for *the sheep*. It is the outlook from the standpoint of sovereignty. It is quite different when we get one sheep out of a hundred as in Matthew. The Shepherd goes after the lost sheep there, *if so be* He find it. The thought of hallowing connects in my mind with what we are speaking of, the holy character of all connected with God's election. He calls us with a holy calling. Holiness is imprinted upon us. If we apprehended this it would have a wonderful effect upon us. It is what the saints are by divine calling. God's calling is outside responsibility. Whom He foreknew He predestinated; it is all on the line of divine sovereignty. It is a chain of gold links from eternity to eternity, and not one link will ever be broken or put out of its place.

Then there is the fish-gate. The Lord had in mind the thought of fish, and the first thing He suggested to His disciples was that they should catch men. The fish-gate answers to responsibility in service; it gives us the other side. Sovereignty is emphasised in connection with the sheep-gate, and responsibility in service and its results are connected with the fish-gate. In connection with this gate the thought of good fish is important. Responsibility in service is always a matter of skill, care and discrimination, it is an important side of things, and is brought before us in many scriptures. "Who then is Apollos, and who Paul? Ministering servants, through whom ye have believed", 1 Corinthians 3: 5. Responsibility in service carried on has certain results. The importance of having fins and scales is emphasised. If we have the sense of divine sovereignty we know we can do nothing unless God prospers it, but care and discrimination are required. In Matthew 13 they sit down and make a selection, and put the good fish into vessels and cast the worthless away. That is what is going on now.

2 Timothy is putting the good fish into vessels; those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart are good fish. The vessels are local assemblies for the good fish.

The fish-gate gives a wider scope of things than the sheep-gate, for it brings us to what is universal. Fishing is to catch men. The sea suggests what is

universal, and the thought is to catch men and bring them out of it for God. We can all see the importance of these two great principles put together. These are the only two gates which are said to be built, which shows the importance of what is suggested; the principle of divine sovereignty in connection with the sheep-gate, and the principle of responsibility in service in connection with the fish-gate. If we do not understand these two principles we shall make no headway towards the city. These are foundation principles. These two gates were entirely lost in christendom and so had to be rebuilt; the others were repaired. This indicates a special significance in these two gates, and the principles suggested in them are vital. If we are not right in our souls as to divine sovereignty or responsibility in service, it would be useless to go further in the development of the gates.

It was never the Lord's thought that people should be converted and left alone. Our responsibility in service is to get all the good fish into vessels. There are those in the christian profession who are worthless in regard of the city idea. None but good fish go in by the fish-gate. There are those in the christian profession whom we can but regard as worthless in regard of God's present thought. This would help us if we saw that all is in view of the fountain-gate, the enjoyment together in assembly conditions of what is spiritual, that which gives pleasure to Christ. There are those whom the Lord rejected, and whom we have to reject, especially in relation to this thought of the city, which is something enshrined in the present thoughts of God. It stands as a city on a hill that cannot be hid. You look out for the qualifications in a person, not merely in what they say. You look for fins and scales. I knew a man who professed to be converted on a Sunday night, and on the Monday night he was found in the public house; he was a bad fish without fins or scales. The thought of selection is a great principle in Scripture. The fins are that by which the fish takes a straight course through the element surrounding it. The scales are preservative and keep it from pernicious influences. You look for a young convert to take a straight course and go against the stream; he has scales, protecting armour. Paul, in writing to the Romans, speaks of the armour of light — protection. All that enters into the thought of good fish. Most of those brought into blessing have shown evidence of divine work before professing faith in Christ. It was a great help to me before I was converted to be thrown into the company of the most wicked set of men I had ever had to do with. I felt that, if I did not make some sort of stand, I would be done. That is the sort of feeling in a soul with no knowledge of salvation.

A good convert looks out for people like himself or better than himself. He has precious thoughts of Christ and he looks out for other people with precious thoughts of Christ, and if he finds someone with more than he has he is very

pleased. That is how a young convert finds the fellowship. Great principles are connected with the sheep-gates and fish-gates.

Now we move on to *the gate of the old wall*, which may have reference to that principle of separation which has been set up from of old, indeed, which always marked off the saints from the earliest point of God's dealings with men. It is not new to the assembly. This great matter of separation is an ancient principle of God's grace. We have fallen on times when it is badly in need of repair. The great thought of the wall is separation, a security brought about on the principle of separation. It has marked the saints in all ages, before and after the flood and all down the ages. It is an old principle that has to be repaired; it marked men like Enoch and Noah, who walked with God. We shall only enter into God's city as this principle is repaired in our souls and associations — the principle of separation from what is not of God. We could not enter the city on any other principle. Withdrawing from unrighteousness — that is an old wall. There has always been a tendency to slip away. In Hebrews we are told to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard lest we slip away, showing the danger of slipping away from what is of God. Peter, in his epistle, stirs up the minds of the saints by way of remembrance, showing that things were in need of repair. The principle of separation is essential. People talk about narrowness if saints seek to walk in separation, but are they narrow? It is the people who *say* these things that are narrow. The most separate man is bound to be the widest man in sympathies, light and intelligence. He is the man who has great thoughts, so that separation is the way of enlargement. As Paul tells the Corinthians, "Be ye also enlarged". How? "Come out ... and be ye separate" is the way of enlargement.

Even in Israel we see the principle of separation. Godly Israelites were by their godliness bound to be separate. If we put ourselves on common ground with people of the world we shall slip away from what is of God in our own souls. We cannot be at home with those who are of the world without slipping away from what is of God. We all have to see to it that we are in separation. How searching it is! "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world" — that is the principle of separation.

Then the valley-gate has a very searching voice for us. We might say with all reverence that the Lord Himself came in by the valley-gate. He came in by the manger and went out by the cross. The valley-gate secures a large measure of separation, an essential kind of separation. The principle of the valley-gate would secure things for God; it would have reference to those who, like the Lord, do not move in the activity of their own wills but are in subjection. The valley-gate is Philippians 2, the dung-gate is Philippians 3. The valley-gate sets

forth that principle of humiliation seen in absolute perfection in the Lord. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". It is to be the real thing, and apart from it there is no entering into God's city. We can only walk together on the principle of the valley-gate. Paul speaks of "all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" that is the valley-gate. We cannot enjoy spiritual things apart from that. We have no idea how our high thoughts of ourselves stand in the way of our happiness. Very few of us are aware what miserable offenders we are against our spiritual joy.

THE BUILDING OF THE WALL, NEHEMIAH 3

Nehemiah 3:13-32

It is well to keep in mind that the gates set forth the way by which we enter into what is of God; certain principles being set forth in the different gates, and these principles have to be set up and maintained in our souls if we are to have access to the precious privileges which are the portion of the saints. The teaching of the gates is of the greatest importance for us all. The crowning point in connection with the gates of the city is the fountain-gate, which seems to be connected with the Spirit and therefore requires spiritual persons to enter into it. The previous gates would indicate how spirituality is developed and maintained, which is by separation and by that spirit of self-humbling set forth in the valley-gate, and the refusal of all that would give us self-importance as set forth in the dung-gate. These things would give us spirituality, which we require in order to enter into what is set forth in the fountain-gate.

The apostle says in Philippians, "I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". That is the dung-gate. All those things which would give him importance as a man in the flesh he absolutely rejects as filth; all had to go out by the dung-gate. That is very important. We all have to learn it; we all have points by which self-importance would come in. Peter was anxious to retain his reputation as a good Jew, but it had to go out by the dung-gate. These things which the apostle called filth are things which people would be proud of, not ashamed of. The things we are proud of are more offensive to God than anything else.

Uzziah did not make use of the valley-gate; his heart was lifted up to his destruction. That is true of any of us, and therefore the valley-gate is most important. When the disciples asked the Lord who was the greatest, He set a little child in their midst and said, "Unless ye are converted and become as little children, ye will not at all enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, *he* is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens", Matthew 18: 3, 4. That is the answer in the New Testament to the valley-gate. These warnings are for us and stand in connection with the principles of christian fellowship. That is the teaching of this chapter; it sets forth in a symbolical way the great principles of fellowship, how we walk together as a united company in separation from the world, which the wall speaks of, and in humbling ourselves and refusing all that the flesh boasts in, so that we become spiritual. None of us would like to be stamped permanently with the character of being carnal.

In the fountain-gate we come to what requires spirituality. If we do not walk in separation and humility, refusing all that would make something of the flesh, we shall not be spiritual,

and we shall not enjoy the spiritual privileges connected with the fellowship. None of us should merely be content with knowing we have the Spirit, and perhaps be grieving Him all the time.

A man who has been through these three gates, a man who walks in holy separation from the world, refusing all that gives importance to the flesh, that man is a spiritual man. It is a very practical exercise. If we are not enjoying the spiritual gain of the fellowship it is a sad condition to be in. The Lord said in John, "the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life"; that is the fountain-gate. It is the only one of the gates said to be covered, suggesting that it speaks of what is not public; it is only known privately by those who enter. What is spiritual is private; it belongs to the spiritual. It says distinctly that the natural man cannot know the things of God. That is what is suggested by being covered; it is not an open and public matter, but private. The saints as walking together in the fellowship have secret joys known only to themselves, and a stranger does not meddle with them. We do not want to go on only outwardly with things, but inwardly. What is the good of fellowship if we are not going on with the inward joys of it? It is an empty form, and all becomes formal, orthodox and dry. The spiritual side of the fellowship is only known by the spiritual; it is a private matter. This should have a great effect on the service of God. When they carried the tabernacle through the wilderness, all was covered, showing that the holy things are not to be exposed, they are to be covered.

The public witness is maintained as we walk in separation. Separation of walk is very important, and then a lowly spirit of dependence on God for everything, refusing all the pride of the flesh. All these enter into the public witness. The instruction of this chapter is to show how the things of God are maintained in separation from everything else. The principles on which they are entered into are set forth in the gates. A spiritual person is a testimony all the time.

Then there is a spiritual ministry set forth in the pool of Siloam. It is necessary to be spiritual to enjoy the ministry. Carnal people could not enjoy spiritual ministry. The ministry of Christ is found within the circle of christian fellowship. The word 'Siloam' means 'sent'. The prophet Isaiah refers to it when he says, "this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah which flow softly", Isaiah 8: 6. They set forth the precious ministry of Christ coming out through Isaiah. Where does the precious ministry of Christ come from today? That is what we are to

be after. We are very dependent on spiritual ministry for ability to see things. People who pay no attention to ministry never see anything. The blind man washed at the pool of Siloam and came seeing. We are told too what he did see; he saw Christ. How he grew in his apprehension of Him! He began by saying, "a man called Jesus", and he finished by worshipping Him as the Son of God. That was the result of washing at the pool of Siloam. The thing is to *wash* in the ministry and that means that the Person of Christ becomes great to us. We must allow the ministry to exercise its power on us so that we get an apprehension of Christ that is of a spiritual order; that is most important. If we walk together in the fellowship, what is our object? It ought to be that we want all to be where the waters of Siloam flow softly. The pool of Siloam is a type of all spiritual ministry. We ought to look and pray for more spiritual ministry. We should not come together for a reading without exercise that there should be spiritual ministry. If the waters of Siloam do not flow in the meetings for ministry, we shall find that the saints will not come.

The king's garden is another thing. These are a beautiful collection of spiritual thoughts which are most instructive. All spiritual ministry has in view that we come under the influence of impressions of Christ; the result of that will be that there will be something for His pleasure, and that is the king's garden. The Song of Songs speaks of that in chapter 4: 12. All this is the spiritual side of the fellowship; there is a fresh action of the Holy Spirit in connection with the fountain and there is spiritual ministry at the pool of Siloam, a ministry sent from the Lord. That is what we want on all occasions, not a ministry that a brother has looked up before he came. The result is that spiritual features are developed which become delightful to the Lord as His garden. The Lord looks at each one, and points out something beautiful to Him about each one. He views the saints as having features proper to His sister or spouse. We should all covet to have these features so as to be conscious that the Lord loves us. John speaks of himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. John was conscious all the time that Jesus loved him because he was lovable. The Lord saw John as a beautiful plant in His garden. So with Peter,

who at one time said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee". The Lord delighted in that. Thomas, also, said, "Let *us* also go, that we may die with him". The Lord appreciated that and loved him for it. The king's garden speaks of the saints as attractive to the Lord, so that what goes on all the week enters into this. What has the Lord seen in me all the week to make Him pleased to see me come in at the door on Lord's day morning? Has He seen me do an act of kindness for His sake, or speak of Him, or help some poor needy saint? Have we found pleasure in reading the Word and ministry of His servants? All these things enter into what the saints are as the king's garden.

These are the fruits that come out and bring pleasure to the Lord, and then He delights to see us come in at the door on Lord's day morning. He will say something about every brother or sister. We can all bring forth something as the king's garden. There are some choice things contributed by sisters, Hannah's song and Mary's and Deborah's. There are many hymns written in our hymn-book by sisters. There is something for the Lord in all that. It is not simply what we say to Him when we come together; the Lord looks at what we have been in our homes and business life, the things that He can have pleasure in all the time. All that enters into the king's garden.

This brings out in a figurative way the features and gain of the christian fellowship and what the Lord gets through the saints walking together in the christian fellowship. This refers to our actual responsible life here; sisters are not to speak in the assembly, but that does not say they are not to bring rich contributions to the assembly. The hymns written by sisters are a rich contribution to the assembly. Every sister should covet to bring a rich contribution.

We have the general thought of the fountain-gate, and then certain things associated with it, and then there is a beautiful suggestion that we are not to stop on that level, precious as it is. The stairs go down, but they are used for going up. The actual use of the stairs was for going up, showing that there is something higher and more spiritual than anything mentioned yet — something we have to go up to. Paul could not speak of those things to the Corinthians; they were not spiritual enough. "Revealed to *us* by his Spirit" is apostolic. If we are in the gain of the christian fellowship and all that is spiritual in that fellowship, that is not the end. God has something more wonderful and precious still to set forth in these stairs, which go down from the city of David. It refers to what is connected with Christ as no longer known after the flesh, what is connected with Christ in His precious place as risen and glorified, which is outside all here, even the christian fellowship. The Supper should be the King's garden. Brothers and sisters, having been delightful to the Lord through the week, come together to remember Him and eat His supper. That is all connected with the fellowship. But it is possible, after that experience, blessed as it is, to go up to another level. The depths of God are what God has cherished in His love and thoughts before the foundation of the world. The depths of God bring out the greatest heights; if we go down to the depths in the heart of God we come to the highest point of blessing. The youngest of us should understand that is something different from the fellowship. In the fellowship we come together to break bread as people who have pleased the Lord all the week. If we have not, we shall give Him no pleasure when we come together. We break bread to remember the Lord and

praise Him; all that is connected with the fellowship, but then there is something else which the Lord would have us think about. There is another region which speaks of our being risen with Christ. That is wholly spiritual because we are not actually risen; it is outside the range of mind and sense and all that is natural. Scripture speaks of our being made to sit down together in the heavenlies, and we have to go up the stairs for that.

This chapter presents a wonderful picture designed by the Spirit of God to help us as to the fellowship. We must all recognise that there is no reality in it if we do not take character from these things. It is a matter for prayer with each of us; we do not set up to say these things are true but to earnestly desire that they may be true. We have to build these different gates, make these principles good in our own souls. This chapter is what the saints do; it is the responsible side. Nehemiah saw how all was broken down and he went to work so that what was broken down might be built up.

All this is most important for all of us. If I was converted only last night, it applies to me to be in separation from the world and from all that is displeasing to God. I am to walk in spiritual humility, refusing what makes much of myself, then I shall want to enjoy and get the spiritual gain of the christian fellowship. It is for new-born babes to go in for these things as well as for us all.

AN OUTLINE OF THE MASCHIL PSALMS - PSALM 32 (1)

Psalm 32

CAC The thought in our minds in this series of meetings is that we learn from Scripture that God intends to have a company on the earth in these last days marked by wisdom. They are spoken of in Daniel (chapters 11 and 12) as "the wise" — the Maschilim; and it was suggested that the Maschil Psalms, the Psalms of instruction, would have a special place with those who are spoken of as the wise or instructed ones. It must be manifest to any exercised soul that we are in the last days, in that period of the church's history which corresponds with the period in Daniel (chapters 11 and 12) which relates to Israel; so it is of all importance that we should be wise, instructed.

The first of these is Psalm 32, and that gives us the knowledge of God as brought to us in the glad tidings. We have the blessedness of knowing our sins forgiven, sin covered, all guile removed, a purged conscience, the Spirit given — God made known as a Justifier, Deliverer, Director and Spring of joy. That is in substance what the gospel brings to us. This psalm is a gospel psalm, it brings to us the blessings of the new covenant as known in the gospel and enjoyed by the Spirit — that is the first great instruction that God would impart to us.

It is well for us always to remember that the saints are the subjects of divine instruction. There is no deeper blessing in the new covenant order of things than, "They shall be all taught of God"; the Lord Himself quotes this. It does not mean merely to be instructed in Scripture. One might take a class of boys and girls and teach them the Scriptures and expound their meaning; that is very blessed, but that is not the instruction we have before us in these 'maschil' or 'instruction' psalms; they bring out that in which God would have us instructed. In them the soul is learning God and Christ through many deep soul exercises. We must each go through these deep exercises; we cannot learn only from a book. It is obvious to anyone reading the Psalms that there is not one that does not involve a great deal of exercise in learning it. The Psalms are a wonderful part of Scripture, there is so much soul-history in them. We should not go to the Psalms for doctrine, but for soul experiences and to see how God is learnt.

Psalm 32 is the way we arrive at the knowledge of God as He will be known by Israel in the new covenant. It opens the subject of forgiveness and non-imputation of sin; the rest of the psalm follows on the knowledge of this. We can confidently say that this is an experience that the Lord never had. He is brought before us in many of the earlier psalms, and it is in view of what He is

as presented there in His beauty and perfection that the soul has any due sense of sin.

We must remember that the numbering of the Psalms is inspired, so they are in divine order; they are not like the chapters of the Bible, which are man's arrangement, or like a hymn-book where the hymns may be in any order. We read for instance, "It is written in the second psalm". We cannot transpose the psalms.

Now Psalm 32 comes in after a wonderful unfolding of the Person of Christ, morally, personally and sacrificially; and also of His death, His resurrection, His ascension and glory. Such an experience as that of Psalm 32 follows upon knowing Christ as unfolded in the previous psalms.

The first book of Psalms, that is, Psalm 1 - Psalm 41, is a most wonderful part of Scripture. It is full of the Man of God's good pleasure, God's Anointed; it begins with the blessedness of that Man and ends with the same One set before God's face for ever. Think of such Psalms as Psalm 1, Psalm 2, Psalm 8, Psalm 16, Psalm 22, Psalm 24. They present the Christ of God, the Son of God. If He comes in we cannot be astonished that there is forgiveness for sinful men. His coming in liberated the heart of God; all the love and grace of forgiveness was in God's heart. He had made Himself known as forgiving iniquity as "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth", but His heart was not set free until Christ came and the work was accomplished. God introduces His anointed Son in Psalm 2, "Thou art my Son". Then He is the Son of man in Psalm 8, the One who can make Jehovah's Name excellent in all the earth, and all is put under His feet. In Psalm 16 we see His moral perfections as walking here before God, separate from the idolatrous world, and making those who love God, the excellent of the earth, His companions. What an unfolding is Psalm 22 of the work of Christ! And as the result of that work God's name is declared to the brethren, and there is singing in the midst of the assembly. As we have Christ before us, and His work and resurrection, we can understand how the heart of God is free to come out in new covenant character. He is free to teach us in spite of all we have been and still are. He can unfold Christ to us and the result of His coming in. Psalm 32 is one of the most blessed unfoldings of it in the Old Testament.

In the Psalms we have the inward feelings of Christ, His feelings and experiences. We do not find that so much in the gospels; there we find rather His words and acts. It is a great thing to read the Psalms so as to find Christ there. They are more read by believers universally than any other part of Scripture, but it is usually to get comfort, and only what they feel applies to

them is picked out. They are welcome to get what comfort they can, but it is better to look in the Psalms for Christ and His experiences. We get deliverance that way, for we are occupied with another Person and forget self, and these are happy moments. C.H.M. called that the highest stage of Christian experience. We need to cultivate it; it is quite possible to be occupied with Christ and with the Father's thoughts about Him.

As the Spirit of God has introduced in the Psalms the incarnation, the death, resurrection, ascension and coming again of Christ, we are entitled to bring all that into the Psalms and to read them in the light of what subsists in the Spirit's day. That is, instead of reading them in the light of Old Testament piety, we may read them in the light of the present position of Christ, begotten in time, filling up His allotted pathway here, going through death, risen, ascended and coming again. The greatest instruction that God could give us is in the coming in of Christ; and He would also instruct us in the results for us.

Psalm 32 is the basis, the foundation of the Maschil psalms. Without it we would be afraid to look at some of them. God would start every soul with the light of how He has brought in Christ, and of all He has substantiated in Him. We may take up all, even the deepest, soul-anguish, in the light of that. In the history of souls, even of those breaking bread, it is often more like a thousand exercises and coming to Christ at the end, but that is not the divine way. The divine way is to begin with Christ and have all the exercises in the light of Him. It makes all the difference between bondage and liberty. Christ was in the mind of God when Adam was made; he was "the figure of him that was to come". Adam was made like Christ, not Christ like Adam.

In Psalm 32 we find a man under the pressure of God's hand day and night. God is seeking to make him own what he is and what he has done, and He will not let him go until he owns the truth. The longer he holds out the worse for him. He goes through all the exercises of verses 3 and 4, bones waxing old, groaning all the day long, moisture turned into the drought of summer. What a great depth of exercise, and all to make the man confess he has sinned! God cannot bless the unrepentant sinner. It is most important not to miss that, for the preaching of the gospel without repentance gives poor converts, without moral foundation in their souls. Repentance is a great blessing from God, one of the greatest blessings of the gospel — "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name". God affords man an opportunity of taking a right place before Him. One man found no place for repentance, but God gives us every opportunity. It is the work of God wrought by these exercises: He brings the subjects of His grace to repentance, and when there is repentance there is the blessedness of verse 1. In its application to us, this

implies that we have the Spirit. It is most instructive, because it brings in the knowledge of God as known in the Spirit, forgiveness, non-imputation of sin, and all guile taken from our spirits. You have not to make the least pretence to be anything but what you are: the worse you are the more you glorify divine grace. The Pharisee is very lively in us all; he is always there.

This psalm is the basis of Romans 1 to 5; it leads to blessedness. Romans 4 and 5 answer to this; indeed it is quoted there. Then you are so assured of God's attitude to you and so in the blessedness of it that it leads to prayer (verse 6). The forgiven man is a godly man. We see the true godly One, the holy One, in Psalm 16, but the forgiven man is godly, too; he has acquired the character of Christ. I am a forgiven sinner and, as having the Spirit, I have acquired the character of Christ by pure grace.

For the praying man there is wonderful salvation. Whatever pressure there may be, there is a compassing about with songs of deliverance. The godly man has an outlet — prayer. All the power of Satan cannot get over a praying man: the old hymn says, 'Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees'. If there is godliness with us, it is in the Holy Spirit, not fleshly. Here there is a praying man who finds God it is a time when God can be found, He does not hide Himself. "Now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation". Prayer is a great safeguard. A man in blessedness, who has the Spirit and is godly, who has the character of Christ, will not ask for things to consume them on his own lusts. If I have the Spirit and am patterned after Christ, I must be true to what I am. When God sees a praying man, He says, as it were, 'That is Christ'. Every true prayer is in the Spirit. There is such a thing as a cry of misery, but true prayer is from a godly person. You may feel you will pray, and when exercised you discover you cannot, and you realise it was something not worth being prayed about. This Psalm would make us wise ones, 'maschilim'; they have a great place in Daniel 11 and 12. Here we see them in the making.

Verses 8 and 9 are connected with spiritual movements. One in the blessedness of the Spirit, who is godly, prayerful, and who knows songs of deliverance, can count on spiritual leading with regard to spiritual movements. This is not exactly guidance in everyday matters, as for example where I should spend my holidays. We are not to be unintelligent like horses and mules; we often have to be constrained into the path of spiritual blessedness. Perhaps we do not seek the knowledge of God and have to be put on a sick bed; that is constraint. The bit and bridle are not God's pleasure, but we must be broken in, be made subject to God. The One who said, "I delight to do thy will", was absolutely subject. A man employed to train valuable dogs was

asked, 'When do you consider a dog thoroughly trained?' He answered, 'When I am out with the dog and a rabbit runs across the path, if the dog looks at me first, he is thoroughly trained'. That is the point: the dog is thoroughly subdued and catches the master's eye first, and does not move until he catches it. But what good is it for the eye to be upon me if I am not looking to catch it? I must be broken first and then look to God for guidance. If we are subdued to the will of God we escape all the sorrows of the bit and bridle. That kind of discipline is not desired of God; it supposes there is an active will not in harmony with God's, and it has to be restrained by outward things. That is not God's thought of instruction, but He might use it to prevent my doing something wrong. For instance, I might break my leg; that is providential and divine preservation, but it is not in itself instruction. Sons get discipline, but these are horses and mules, and we are warned not to be like them.

This psalm is a good start in the school of divine instruction.

AN OUTLINE OF THE MASCHIL PSALMS - PSALM 42 (2) AND 44 (3)

Psalm 42; Psalm 44

CAC We were looking last week at Psalm 32, which is the first of the psalms designated by the Spirit of God as being instruction, Maschil meaning instruction. We were seeing that Psalm 32 is the basis of all divine instruction; that is, the knowledge of God, sins forgiven, not imputed, and the soul in the blessedness which is the result of the presence of the Spirit. Such a soul is marked by godliness and dependence; he is characteristically like Christ. Divine deliverance comes in for him in answer to prayer, and there is direction spiritually, giving the idea of how he is to move in relation to God. This psalm seems to cover the great principle of the soul's relations with God. God is known as Justifier, known in forgiveness, known as Reconciler, Resource and Director of His people. This is the great fundamental knowledge for those whom God has called in grace; it seems the first element of divine instruction. If our souls are not established in this way in the knowledge of God we cannot go on to be instructed ones. God's purpose is to have instructed persons; we have come under His instruction; it belongs to new covenant conditions, "They shall be all taught of God". And we have come under the instruction of Christ, "if ye have heard him and been instructed in him". It is not what we have read in books, or that we have a certain measure of scriptural information, but God's people have been divinely instructed.

One can see what a difference it makes to begin with the knowledge of God as seen in Psalm 32. In going through even deep and complicated exercises we have a stay, an anchorage in our souls. Psalm 42 indicates deep exercise, but the soul has such a knowledge of God as to confide in Him and to thirst for Him;, the soul finds its resource in the knowledge of God. Now we are put to the test. If God gives the knowledge of Himself He puts it to the test; the trial of faith is very precious to God. God likes to put to the test what we have found in Himself, to test whether we have such a knowledge of Himself that we can go on even if deprived of privileges that we have enjoyed.

I think the second book of Psalms shows that though the people are disinherited and driven out, yet they find God to be sufficient. God Himself becomes the portion of a disinherited people.

We come to this — how much do we know God when we are tested? There is an exercise that the soul has to go through in order to get every element of disquietude stilled in the soul. There may be a great many elements of disquietude even where there is peace of conscience. Psalm 32 would

establish us in peace of conscience; every moral question settled and God known as an available resource. It is one thing to know God as a resource — we should all admit that — but have we really got the living God? That is very experimental. This exercise has to be faced as to whether we have found such a satisfaction in God that all disquietude of soul is quelled. In Psalm 42 you read of a man who can remember how he went to the house of God with the festive multitude, and the voice of joy and praise. In matters of privilege you can go on with meetings and with the festive character of what obtains in the house of God; you can have spiritual pleasure in that, but John and Paul both lost this privilege. Have you enough to go on with even if you lost it? I do not think any of us could say that we have not had some disquietude of soul when tested in this way.

John's ministry deals with the state of heart that requires to be satisfied in the knowledge of God, so *thirst* is spoken of. I suppose the living water in John 4 would be the Spirit as bringing the knowledge of God into the soul as complete satisfaction. The knowledge of God in the power of the Spirit is enough to go on with, even if outward privileges fail. In Psalm 42 we have not only the festive multitude — the house of God is properly filled with the festive multitude, for we ought not to come together mournfully — but we have also the reducing exercise connected with Jordan, the Hermons and mount Mizar. I have thought of the exercise of this Psalm in connection with Paul's exercise in 2 Corinthians. We get the blessedness of the gospel in chapters 3 and 4, but then we see every kind of pressure brought in on the vessel to put to the test whether the blessed good which he ministered was enough to carry him through. He finds that God is enough.

Ques Does that exercise give spiritual increase?

CAC Yes. It is very interesting. There is first the ministry of the gospel, and then we get a tide of discipline brought in on the minister. Then we get the ministry of reconciliation, and then another tide of discipline; the vessel is made to be a witness of the power of what he ministers. It is the living witness of a man who can go through any pressure. There were all kinds of abnormal circumstances and he can go through them in the power of his own ministry; that is divine instruction.

Ques What is the land of the Jordan?

CAC Paul speaks of death working in us; there is nothing so reducing as death. It is the great reducer; it brings down everything that belongs to us naturally. Paul speaks of being always delivered to death; that is the land of the Jordan. "Always delivered unto death ... that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh", 2 Corinthians 4: 11. It is all practical

reduction. If God makes Himself known in grace and goodness, there is a necessity for reducing, that is Jordan. Hermon is a rugged place; we get rugged circumstances to face. Paul had a good many, all kinds of sharp difficulties. Mount Mizar is a little hill; that is where we are reduced. Paul came to it when he had a thorn for the flesh. All this is the reducing line.

The question in this psalm is whether we have an intense desire to prove what the blessed God can be to us in the presence of all these circumstances which are so reducing naturally. Someone has said that the Lord has set us together in local assemblies for the reduction of the flesh. The thought has come to me sometimes that if I could have the consciousness of the presence of God and His love I could go through anything; that seems incontrovertible. We find in verse 5 the confidence of the soul that there is every kind of salvation in God's countenance, "I shall yet praise him, for the health of his countenance" — the footnote is 'salvations', that is, there is every kind of salvation in God's countenance. God shines on me; whether it is in the land of Jordan, or the Hermons, or mount Mizar, God is sufficient. Paul said, "My God shall ...

supply all your need"; he was not referring to temporal needs. There was a company at Philippi set for the testimony of God; they were standing shoulder to shoulder with Paul in the defence of the glad tidings. God would be the same whatever the conditions. Paul had found Him sufficient, and he tells the Philippians they would prove it, too. It is not merely temporal needs. "This shall turn out for me to salvation"; that is like the exercise of this psalm. In this psalm you see a man on the way to it, but Paul had it. One great gain of the Psalms is that they show the way to things, but if you want to come to the things themselves you have to go to the New Testament.

Rem Paul had the sentence of death in himself so as not to trust in himself.

CAC Yes, he had his portion in God though all outward conditions had failed him. In prison Paul had no privileges of meetings, he was deprived of the fellowship of the brethren, he did not go with the festive multitude.

Psalm 44 is very important, because it is not exactly individual but describes the condition of the people of God. The instruction is that we are not in days when God is publicly supporting His people. If we look for signs of public support we shall not find them; so the psalmist goes back to what God did for the fathers, answering for us to what God did in the times of the apostles, the victorious power of God in the apostles. But now the psalmist says, "But thou hast cast off". We are objects of contempt in every way to the adversary. Are we content to take up this exercise? It is a church exercise. Or do we want to be publicly supported and accredited? That is not at all the line that God is on. He has given us up like sheep for the slaughter; that is the outward position.

Some people say they have wonderful things, speak with tongues, heal the sick, or are publicly accredited by God. *We* have to say that we have nothing of the kind. We find in Psalm 44 a people not getting any outward support from God, they are objects of derision, their adversaries regard them with positive contempt, and yet they say, "All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely against thy covenant: Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy path". That is the position publicly. Are we going to hold to what is of God, even though there is no outward indication that God is with us? People say, 'Where is your God? You see very little fruit, you do not do anything, there is no sign that God is with you'. People are so ready to say, 'Where is your God?' But if we want to be instructed ones we have to go on without being publicly accredited. We do not want that, we are not to look for public intervention, we are to expect to be given up as sheep for the slaughter. Publicly God does not interfere and we let people do as they like with us. Many an earnest soul would like to be publicly accredited, to have conversions every day; but it is too late for any company to be signalised or made important in any public way.

Romans 8 shows that all these things do not separate us from the love of Christ. Is the love of Christ enough? Are we content as to the public position to be in derision, contempt, and reproach, but to have compensation in the love of Christ, so that we would rather be in reproach than anything else? The distinction of Philadelphia is "to know that I have loved thee". Our great distinction is to be loved by Christ. We can go on with the remembrance, "yet have we not forgotten thee" — that is the Supper. The Lord commits Himself to us every first day of the week and pledges the fidelity of His love. Is that enough? Are we content to be in public reproach but compensated by the love of Christ? If that is so, it seems to me we shall get a full compensation according to Psalm 45.

We have to remember that Psalm 44 brings in an abnormal condition of things. It is not a day of victory but of public defeat; we got out in defeat publicly. It is what the Lord did, He went out publicly in defeat.

> 'Through weakness and defeat
> He won the meed and crown'. (24:2)

The Lord says to Philadelphia, "Thou hast a little strength".

Nothing could be more blessed than to be so governed by all this divine instruction that the Spirit of God can make us Christ-centred. We see in Psalm 45 a Christ-centred soul; there is not a word in the psalm that is self-centred. It is all what Christ is, what He will be, and what the assembly is to Him. What

a wealth! I do not think it is a wealth that could be known if we had not accepted the instruction of Psalm 44. What is set forth in the next Psalm is so great that it fills the heart; and, instead of the psalmist thirsting, his heart is now welling forth with good matter. We have all the privilege of being composers; we ought to compose something as touching the King. It is a great thing to compose a psalm, although it is good to sing what others have composed!

AN OUTLINE OF THE MASCHIL PSALMS - PSALM 44 (3) AND 45 (4)

Psalm 44; Psalm 45

CAC We were looking at the Maschil psalms, or psalms of 'instruction', the first of which is Psalm 32. It speaks of the blessedness of forgiveness, of the justified man. It sets forth the knowledge of God as known in new covenant conditions. He is known in forgiveness, in justification; He is known as the deliverer, director, resource and joy of His people. This is exactly what is presented to us in the glad tidings, they bring to us the knowledge of God in that way, and it is made good in the soul on the ground of repentance.

The next Maschil psalm is 42. Psalm 42 and Psalm 43 go together. Psalm 43 is not headed, but if you read them you will see that the language unifies them, they are virtually two parts of one psalm. In them we get an instruction of the personal exercise by which God deepens His work in the souls of His people, so that, instead of merely going on with what is public and general, they should have a definite soul link with God personally. It is one thing to go along with what is general, identifying ourselves with the people of God and enjoying what they enjoy — "I passed along with the multitude" — but God wants to give us something more. It is very nice to pass along with the multitude, especially to the house of God, but that is something that we may be deprived of, and God wants to establish something in our souls that we cannot be deprived of, something in definite personal exercise, so that if we are deprived of the outward we may have joy in Him. The man in Psalm 42 is led to have intense desire after God; he has been deprived of what he enjoyed with the multitude and now he has intense desire to have something for himself so that his soul may be preserved. In Psalm 43 we have indicated how it is reached. "Send out thy light and thy truth: *they* shall lead me, *they* shall bring me to thy holy mount, and unto thy habitations. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto the God of the gladness of my joy". This man has the truth of Psalm 32 deepened; God has become more intensely and personally his s joy than when he first heard the gospel. It is only deep exercise that will give us Psalm 43, deep exercise as well as the work of the Spirit; there is no deep thirst for God apart from the Spirit. We have all known what it is to have been with the people of God, to have fallen into our place in the meetings and shared their joy; we have enjoyed things with the festive multitude, but in the ways of God we may lose that, we may have to learn what the Jordan is, what the land of the Hermons and mount Mizar are. We may have distress and pressure, all the things that reduce us and make us feel how little we have of

the knowledge of God in our souls. It is what a man might feel when alone in prison. Many of us know what it is to have a disquieted soul when in circumstances that bring us down! There is not a believer here so young as not to have had a touch of it; but God's object is to give us all the grace of the glad tidings in a deeper way. The psalmist says, "Send out thy light and thy truth: *they* shall lead me". It is one thing to be led by the brethren, and quite another to be led by God's light and truth.

What a deepening it is when God sends out His light and truth and *they* lead us! We have something that does not fail, and then we come to God's tabernacle and altar. We are not carried by the multitude, but are carried along by our own personal experience to God, our exceeding joy. It is like a schoolboy going home for the holidays! There must come a moment in our souls when we feel that going along with what is general does not do. The soul has intense longing for God, and you feel you must have Him for your own satisfaction. You feel that merely going on with fellowship and love — sweet as it is — does not satisfy you. The goodness of God brings us to that. What a source of strength amongst the brethren is a brother or sister who has come to this! God's light and truth have come to that soul and it has moved into the tabernacle of God through its own exercise, and has found God to be the source of exceeding joy. This is definite power that you cannot lose; it holds good if you are in prison, if you are isolated from the brethren, or sick, or laid on your back. What you have learnt cannot be taken from you.

In Psalm 44 there is another instruction. The soul can say, We have heard what wonderful things God did for His people in the past, and He is not doing these things now. What an exercise! It was once all victory, under Joshua, but now,

"But thou hast cast off ... . Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a mockery and a derision for them that are round about us". The psalmist is referring to all the people of God. In presence of exercises like that the soul learns to be faithful to the covenant. Though the conditions are changed, it is much like this in the times of the assembly; it is an assembly exercise in this psalm. We are not now in days when nothing can stand before the people of God. It is now a day of reproach and contempt like the days of Nehemiah when they said, "if a fox went up, it would break down their stone wall", Nehemiah 4: 3. The Israelites were objects of derision, and that is our portion today — we have to learn this, and I doubt if anyone will be stable for God if he does not learn it. What are we to do in times of reproach? Verse 17 tells us, "All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely against thy covenant: Our heart is not turned back, neither have

our steps declined from thy path". That remains for us even though publicly it is a time of reproach. God puts no distinction on us publicly, but we go on with the remembrance — the Supper — and fidelity, and we do not turn back from anything that has been marked out as the testimony of the Lord. We have the peculiar exercise of 2 Timothy, not only normal exercise. In Romans 8 we get the normal suffering that christians have to suffer, but now we have the abnormal suffering of 2 Timothy, the last days: we have the public reproach in which the christian profession is found, and the special reproach attaching to the faithful. Are we prepared to go on steadily through outward reproach and contempt? What is the gain of such a path? The consciousness of being inseparable from the love of Christ, and when that comes into the soul it prepares us for Psalm 45.

We have to be prepared for the path of public reproach. We hear it said, 'There are wonderful things going on here, we have a thousand converted in our place, why do you not join us?' Other say, 'We can heal the sick and speak with tongues, we have everything as it was at the beginning'. There is human glory attached to that. If you want that you will fall into the hands of Satan. We have to accept reproach; Paul in prison is a pattern of the place of the testimony today. An evangelist once said to me, 'We should preach in the finest buildings in the land'. I replied, 'Judging by Scripture I should rather expect to see the evangelist locked up in the county gaol'. The testimony has always been in reproach, but there is a different aspect of things now. In the apostles' day all the power of the world to come was there. We have not apostles now going about working miracles; the apostles turned the world upside down, but we have not anything like that now. If brethren had gone on without any division there would have been no reproach, but the history of divine movements in the assembly and the way they have worked out has resulted in our being in reproach. People say, 'You are all cut up, no one knows how many parties there are'. We are objects of derision; but are we prepared to go on with the covenant and remembrance and not to turn back? On that line we should have our hearts full of Christ. Things are now committed to faithful men, and I include women in that. No other kind of persons would have their heart full of Christ. We sang the hymn just now, 'Our hearts are full of Christ'. Is it true, or do we desire it? I could sing it in the form of prayer, and many other hymns I can sing in the spirit of prayer with an intense desire to be in the truth of them. Hymns are an indication to me of the line on which every desire can go. Hymns are like the permanent way for the train to run on; the desires and affections of the saints can travel along them.

Psalm 45 is perhaps in one way the centre and the crown of the Maschil psalms, because it indicates to us that God can reach such a blessed end with

His people that their hearts are full of Christ and of what stands in relation to Christ for His pleasure. Nothing could be more blessed. This psalm is Christ as He will be known publicly in the world to come, and it is that brought into the hearts of the saints before the time arrives. Before we are in the world to come, the world to come is in us. "The world to come, whereof we speak"; we means all christians. What else have we to speak about but the world to come? What have we to say about this present world? There is no room for Christ in it. We talk about the world to come because God and Christ are going to be supreme in that world, and God and His Anointed have become supreme to us. Instead of being thirsty our souls are welling up and overflowing.

Ques Who is the speaker in Psalm 45?

CAC That raises a very interesting point. The speaker is plainly not God; it is not God telling us about Christ. In the gospel God tells us about Christ, but here it is the heart of a man and the tongue of a man. It is a man speaking about Christ, and that man might be any of us under the power of the love of Christ. The compensation for the position in Psalm 44 is that we get to know our inseparableness from the love of Christ, and if we have found compensation we can compose something: "I say what I have composed". Did it ever strike you that you can compose something about Christ that has never been composed since the day of Pentecost?

It is a great thing to be in the position of lilies. Shoshannim means lilies (see heading of psalm). The lily in Scripture is a figure of the distinctive place that the saints have at the present time. The Lord in the Song of Songs says, "As the lily among thorns, So is my love among the daughters", chapter 2: 2. That is the position today. You may say, 'I know plenty about thorns pricking me and tearing my flesh'; but it is the thorns that give distinctiveness to the lily. How distinctive would a lily be among thorns! In a bed of lilies they are all alike, but contrariety gives distinctiveness. It is like Philippians 2, "harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation". That gives distinctiveness; it is the saints' appreciation of Christ that gives it; that is what makes me a lily if I am one. A lily would symbolise purity, a purity of affection that takes account of Christ, and would say, 'My heart is full of Christ and longs its glorious matter to declare'. The soul in this psalm is really doing that. What a wonderful thing to be liberated so as to say, "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer". In the affections there is a composing of things so that, as we know Christ and appreciate Him, we can speak of Him as He will be known in the world to come. The epistle to the Hebrews deals with the world to come; the beauty and adornments of Christ

as He will be known in the world to come are known now in the hearts of the saints.

Here we see God instructing us in what is most precious to God Himself. To give us a thought of Christ is more pleasurable to God than anything else He could give us. He is filling the soul with thoughts of Christ and teaching us comparisons; He teaches us to recognise the immense superiority of Christ to the sons of men; we have to learn that. It is not that He is superior merely to the sons of Belial, but to the sons of men, those who have fairness Godward, like Enoch, Abraham,

Joseph, Moses, David. It was said of Moses that he was "fair to God", and all the other saints of God have been fair to God, but the One here is fairer, Christ is fairer than the sons of men. That is, what you see in a saint is of the same order but infinitely surpassed in Christ. We see a spiritual feature in the sons of men, but dimly at the best; there is a dimness about it, but you see all the features in undimmed perfection in Christ, so He is fairer than the sons of men. He takes that place before the heart; He surpasses everyone. We find in this psalm how He transcends even His companions, He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His companions. The more we see His features in the saints the more we can appreciate in a transcendent way what we see in Christ. Everything that is fair came from Christ. Suppose I see any feature that is fair in a saint, if it affects my heart rightly it leads me to the fountain, to the One in whom that and every other feature is seen without a flaw. It is not comparing Him with the wicked sons of men, but with those who have had fairness before God; and we have to learn under divine instruction to give Him that place, the transcendent place. The bride in Canticles says of the Beloved, He is "The chiefest among ten thousand". Even the saints disappear then, none of the sons of men could be altogether lovely, but He is "altogether lovely". In all things He has the pre-eminence; we see it on the holy mount. It was not two wicked men who had to disappear, but Moses and Elias. Peter had learned this, so when the Lord raised the question, "who do ye say that I am?" he was able to answer. Others said, John the baptist, or Elias, or Jeremias, or some other man who had fairness. They were all men who were fair to God, but He was fairer, and Peter says, "*Thou* are the Christ, the Son of the living God", Matthew 16: 16. He was far beyond all the others. The bride in the Song of Songs says, He "is my beloved". What a delight for God if such thoughts as these of His beloved One are expressed truly by any of our hearts! This psalm is a song of the Beloved, not only His moral perfections recognised, but He has become the Beloved of our hearts, He has become to our hearts what He is to God. He is God's Beloved, and He is ours. How we are bound up in intimacy of affection with God and with the Beloved!

Up to this point in the psalm we have the Vessel; He surpasses, and transcends, and supersedes everything in this world that has divine beauty and fairness in God's eyes. I used to read this verse as referring to the natural man, but it has helped me to see that everything that has been beautiful for God, "fair to God", is transcended and transfigured in this One. Now, God says, as it were, 'This is the Vessel whom I am going to fill with my grace that He may express it to you'. "Grace is poured into thy lips". We see the Vessel first, what He is personally, and then grace poured into His lips. In that perfect One all the precious thoughts of God are expressed towards men; all was put into that Vessel so that it might flow out to you and me. This is the gospel of Luke; He is seen there as the Vessel, not the Source. We see the Vessel, and then what was put into it, and the delight of God in Him stands in that connection. In Proverbs 8 divine wisdom speaks as the nursling of God's love, "I was daily his delight"; but in what connection? "Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men". God's delight in Him is in connection with the fact that God has expressed in Him all His thoughts of grace towards men in this world. So at His baptism when the Lord took His place with the repentant remnant, it was just *there* and *then* that God opened heaven to say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight". Just when He was taking His place with men, God finds His delight in the Vessel of His infinite thoughts of grace. God would fill our hearts with thoughts of Christ. Think of the grace in the gospel of Luke, in chapters 4, 5, 7, 14, 15, 16 and 23; it is a very flood-tide of the heart of God, the grace of heaven expressed in Christ! It will be publicly known in the world to come, and, wonder of wonders, we know it now.

"Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever" (verse 2). He has made Him blessed for ever; that carries us to the new position in which He is found. All the grace of which he was the Vessel here still subsists in Him as the exalted and glorified Man, blessed for ever at God's own right hand. This is the whole subject of testimony in the beginning of Acts. Whatever was expressed in Him as the Vessel of grace, a lowly Man, is all expressed in Him as the glorified Man.

Everything in Psalm 45 is Christ-centred and Christ-filled, and this is the true fruit of spiritual liberty. If I have learned the lessons of Psalm 42, Psalm 43 and Psalm 44, this is the condition of soul that I shall be in; and if I am not in that condition it is a matter to pray about. And we can pray with no uncertainty, for it is the mind of God that we should have it, and He has brought us under divine instruction that we should have it.

In the world to come God will bring in publicly truth, meekness and righteousness; and if they are not accepted in the way of divine instruction they will be brought in in divine power. The sword and arrows (verses 3 and 5) come in so that these blessed things, truth, meekness and righteousness, should be brought in to fill the earth. But these are things that have come into the hearts of the saints now. If truth and meekness and righteousness have place in my affections, the world to come is in me, though I am not yet in the world to come.

Psalm 45 answers in a way to the epistle to the Hebrews. That which will irradiate the world to come is the glory of Christ, and though it is not public now, we have not to wait; we can now see Jesus crowned with glory and honour. We can see Him in His glory and kingdom, and stand in the most intimate and personal relation to Him. It is a wonderful thing to have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; it would emancipate us from everything that is not Christ. The question is, What sort of matter is my heart engaged with? The psalmist speaks of a good matter and the things touching the King. What an immense thing to compose in our affections something in regard to Christ and to have our hearts filled with this good matter! God has expressed all that Christ is and all His grace in a Vessel of incomparable beauty and preciousness and attractiveness. There is One fairer than the children of men, One who transcends them all, not simply the children of fallen men but those who have had divine beauty, even an Abraham, a Moses, a David; He transcends them all. "Grace is poured into thy lips"; God has put all His favourableness to men as a testimony in the lips of that blessed Man. It has come to us in the midst of all our distance and unbelief. God has brought in everything suitable to Himself, and everything attractive to the heart, in Christ; He is without a rival, without a peer, He stands alone! That is the One in whom God has brought His grace near to us and God has blessed Him for ever, God has glorified Him because He is so excellent.

God is bringing in truth, meekness and righteousness. God will make everything give way to Christ, and, if it does not give way to the attractiveness of His Person and His lips, it will give way by sword, and arrows, and the strength of His right hand. God has taken us each up according to His eternal purpose to make everything in us give way to Christ and to develop in our souls those features of Christ that are suitable to Him. Truth, meekness and righteousness are the features of Christ, so these are things to obtain. The power of the kingdom lies in these things, as brought out in verses 6 and 7, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness;

therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy companions". It is wonderful to see what the kingdom does as vested in the Son of the Father's love. It brings us to love what Christ loves and to hate what Christ hates. The kingdom is vested in that Person, so we cannot come under the influence of Christ without loving what He loves and hating what He hates; and the measure in which that is true is the measure in which we have come into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love. In this kingdom it is never arbitrary rule. What a wonderful kingdom where the subjects love what the King loves and hate what the King hates! They would be fit companions for Him. It is just what we get here; the kingdom exists that the King may have companions. He wants companions who are morally all of one with Himself. We could not entertain the thought of the assembly if we had not a generation like that; we have the kingdom thought first, before the thought of the queen. The influence of the kingdom is the great thing; authority might be arbitrary but influence is not, it is moral or spiritual. In no aspect of the kingdom is the authority arbitrary, it works morally by God bringing adequate influences to bear upon us. It is a system of liberty and love, not bondage. It is a wonderful thing to get the consciousness of being suitable to be companions of Christ.

Ques Who says in verse 7, "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness"?

CAC I suppose the saint who is in the spiritual vision of it. The woman who anointed Him at the end of the gospels had the sense that He was the anointed One, and if He was God's anointed One then He was her anointed One too, and she poured out everything on Him. The thought of anointing introduces the thought of fragrance; it is that aspect of anointing here.

We are accustomed to look at it too much on the official side. It is official when the priest is anointed and when the king is anointed, but in this psalm it is not His official anointing; it is the oil of gladness — one does not think of that as being official. He has companions in joy, those who are invested with some of the fragrance that belongs to Him. I do not think we could anoint Him without becoming invested with some of His fragrance. The woman in the gospels put some on Him, but she carried some away with her.

The point in this psalm is what is known privately before all that Christ is is known publicly. We are inside, within the royal apartments in this psalm — "All glorious is the king's daughter within". She is not said to be glorious without; it is in the seclusion of the spot where Christ is known and enjoyed, where divine thoughts are known. "Myrrh and aloes, cassia, are all thy garments" — it is the fragrance of the Person. There is a peculiar delight in apprehending

the fragrance of Christ; it is something different from His moral perfections. We are all prepared to say that He is fairer than the sons of men; there is every moral perfection in Him as loving righteousness and hating lawlessness; He is suitable to be the expression in Himself of the kingdom of God. But in fragrance there is something subtle; all His garments are imbued with the anointing that is put upon Him. If the priest is anointed and the oil runs down to the hem of his garment he becomes fragrant. We have the same spices here that were put in the holy anointing oil. It seems to me that the fragrance of Christ came out peculiarly in His death.

It should affect our spirits, and one longs increasingly that one's spirit should be affected. We are converted, and we give up things outwardly wrong, and we come among the people of God, and fall in with a certain conduct and manners, and perhaps there is something for the pleasure of God in that; but how far are our spirits affected? How much is there of the fragrance of Christ about us? God is the Father of spirits; He is not so much concerned about our conduct as about our spirits, because if our spirits are right, our conduct will be. My spirit is what I am, it is the true *I*.

It is blessed to think of the fragrance of the Person brought out in death. In the New Testament the myrrh and aloes are identified with Him as lying in death; they were brought by Nicodemus, and are not mentioned in Matthew, Mark or Luke;

they are reserved for John. In Matthew, Mark and Luke the linen is emphasised, its purity in Matthew, and its fineness in Mark and Luke, but these spices are not spoken of. That suggests to me that the spices are connected with His Person, so we might expect to find them in John, and a hundred pounds weight of the spices is brought there. They are identified with Him as lying in death. We have the fragrance of such a Person as John presents lying in death. Matthew presents Him as the trespass-offering; Mark as the sin-offering; in Luke He goes into death in the grace of God; but in John it is the Person. What a fragrance of suffering love connects itself with the Person! There is a rare and peculiar fragrance, and we cannot help feeling how little we know of it. We understand and know a little as to the value of His work, but God would affect us greatly by the fragrance there was in His beloved Son lying in death; the Lord would lead us to appreciate the whole fragrance of His Person as brought out under the eye of God in His death.

Ques Is it the same thought as a sacrifice for a sweet-smelling savour in Ephesians?

CAC Yes. "Even as the Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Ephesians 5: 2) —

it is the fragrance brought out. The assembly — the queen — is formed in the appreciation of that.

Ques Would Esther help as to that?

CAC Yes, she was purified with precious spices. The Lord wants a bride whose inmost sensibilities and emotions and feelings are in correspondence with His own, not only morally but in this indescribable fragrance.

The great thought in this psalm is that we are for His delight; it is not what we do. It is the relationship of each company to the King; whether it is the companions, or the queen, or the virgins, they are all in direct personal relationship to Him. We need to cultivate an intensely individual sense of our relationship to Christ, that we love Him and He loves us; it is an intimate personal thing. We think a great deal about our being affected by His love and company, and we may be, but there is another consideration. How is He affected by our love? He is touched by it. He has told us He is greatly affected by our love; He is so affected by it that He will come to us. He says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments.

And I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter" (John 14: 16); and then further down He says, "I am coming to you" (verse 18). It is as if He said, 'If ye love Me I will come to you'. Do you think the Lord would keep away from His people as gathered together affectionately to Him? He could not keep away, He would be so affected that He would come to them. I should like to know something of His delight in the love of His own. In the Song of Songs the beloved is arrested by the love of the bride. Do we give the Lord credit for really loving us?

I have thought in connection with this fragrance that, while Scripture identifies the myrrh and aloes with Christ in death, there is very little to identify the cassia, and I wondered if it might refer to all the fragrance of Christ in manhood which was carried through to resurrection. There was that in the Lord which could pass unchanged into the resurrection sphere. While the Lord has laid down His life and passed out of the condition of blood and flesh there is an immense blessedness disclosed in Him as man on earth that is unchanged in resurrection. Take His joy, His delight in God, His love to His people, all His affections, everything that ruled the soul of the Lord. Scripture speaks of His soul, "Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol" — all His inwardness was carried without a change into resurrection. This is of great importance to us, because all that is of a spiritual order with us can go without a change into resurrection. There can be a fragrance about us now that would not suffer the slightest change if we passed into resurrection, it would be something that cannot be changed. The Lord would exercise us about so partaking of the

fragrance that attaches to Christ that we should be acquiring qualities and features that would go right through to resurrection. What we cannot carry through would not be of much importance. In the christian circle we are occupied with things that can pass unchanged into the resurrection sphere. For example, suppose I can praise God, will not that go through to resurrection? If I love God and Christ and the brethren, will not all those spiritual affections and emotions go through to resurrection? That is why the Lord is so concerned that we should enjoy eternal life, because none of that will be left behind. We can acquire something that is altogether different from that which attached to us when we came into the world. The queen is in gold of Ophir, she has a new vesture that she never had before. Have we taken into account the fact that we are set up in an entirely new way to be suitable to Christ, and that the greatest things of all are freely given to us of God? The prodigal is the best illustration of it; all that belonged to him by nature was self-will and self-indulgence, poverty and rags, but that is all gone and there is an entirely new beginning, everything for the father's delight; the best robe, the ring, and the shoes. Everything is perfect and is of God, so he goes into the house as an ornament of the place, an object of delight of the father's house. The queen stands in gold of Ophir, nothing is there that belongs to what is natural, it is all spiritual. It is interesting to see in this psalm the intimate relationship that is established. You do not find the queen in the Song of Songs; there the marriage is not consummated, the feminine speaker's affections vacillate, answering to many of our experiences. But in Psalm 45 you have reached the stability of affection.

We were looking last week at Psalm 45, it is Christ as He will be known in the world to come. It is our privilege to have the blessed knowledge of Him beforehand, both of what He is personally, and of the precious grace poured into His lips and expressed in Him as a Man on earth; and of His place in glory. God is teaching us that everything is to give place to Christ. If place is not given to Him under the power of grace and love, it will be with swords and arrows; His enemies will be made a footstool for His feet.

We must not look for outward distinction amidst general departure, but we ought to look for increased knowledge of Christ, to have that favour. Outwardly we are in the weakest possible position, but inwardly we can have this blessed knowledge of Christ that marks the wise.

We were speaking last week of the myrrh and aloes being in reference to the sufferings of Christ; all that pertains to His Person has come out in the greatest fragrance in His death, so every office He fills, every service He does, every glory that attaches to Him as Man is affected by His having lain in death.

This fragrance attaches to Him as having been in death. In the ways of God all that belongs to Christ has acquired fragrance through His death. The King has had to be the Sufferer, and the fragrance that attaches to His Person has come out in death; all His perfections have come out in sweet odour before God. Now all those who love Him perceive it; "all thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia". They carry the fragrance of the love that took Him through such amazing suffering and sorrow — the King has become the Sufferer. The King has companions, too; He has not only subjects but companions who love what He loves and hate what He hates, and who are mightily influenced by the way He has gone. We have learned how He loves righteousness. He would die to establish it; and He hates lawlessness, He would die to put it away. Everything that is reached on our side for the comfort and pleasure of Christ is secured at the cost of death. He has reached everything through death, and everything in us for the pleasure of God is reached in the same way; and that is why we get ivory palaces.

"Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad". There is the thought of ivory palaces being secured for Christ, and every bit of the material of such palaces has been secured through death. The elephant is a fine animal, but its ivory is only secured through death. My impression is that every palace for Christ is secured through death. On what principle can we secure ivory palaces for Christ? It must be by putting to death our members which are on the earth; we must use death as a weapon. It is our mortal members as in Colossians 3. Each of us might live on the same principle as people of the world, we might use everything for self-gratification, move on the lines natural to us, indigenous to our nature, but there is nothing for Christ in that. The lover of Christ has learnt to bring death on all this, to secure something for Christ, an ivory palace for Him. Every bit of ivory speaks of death. Which would we prefer, to move on lines of self-gratification, or to provide an ivory palace for Christ? Suppose there is something that I might do as a man living in this world that would gratify me, but instead of that I apply death to it because I would like to secure a palace for Christ. It is just as the affections work that something is secured for Him, just in proportion as our affections work is a palace secured, and out of them "stringed instruments have made thee glad", they can minister to His joy. Should we not like to secure something for the joy of Christ? It is most appealing for the youngest. Naturally we could not think of an ivory palace, but we have to think of it spiritually as a place of reception for Christ, every part of which has been secured by bringing in death on what is natural to us, bringing it in in the power of affection. People often try to do it without the power of affection, but this psalm is the language of a lover; he has found sufficient in Christ to make

Him a commanding interest. That Person is a commanding object, and in that affection we can prepare an ivory palace; it is open to the youngest to do it. In that ivory palace there are stringed instruments, in the power of affection there is response to Christ. Think of the possibility of having something in our affections to make the glorified Christ glad! We can minister to the gladness of Christ. We have to be very jealous about it, for a stringed instrument is very delicate and easily goes out of tune; it has to be carefully adjusted. No musician would use a violin as it was left from the last time it was used; he must have it carefully tuned. If we have an ivory palace and stringed instruments we have to watch very carefully that our affections do not go out of tune, that the music is not flat, for we are called to minister to the joy of Christ.

We have looked at what Christ is before our eyes, but now what are we for Him? We have seen His personal glory, His official glory, His kingly glory, now what is for His pleasure? That brings in the subjective side. We have the great privilege of providing stringed instruments, but we must come under the hand of the Chief Musician again and again to get tuned to the right standard of quality. This is one of the psalms for the Chief Musician; it is a question of how the music sounds in His ear. Think of music to sound in Christ's ear!

There is nothing that would tune our spirits like the Lord's supper, like the fresh presentation of Himself. The great advantage of being a lover is to get manifestations of Himself, it is by them the Lord tunes the instruments. I do not think we should think of manifestations happening once in a hundred years! Many think it was only J.N.D. and J.B.S. who had them, but it is the normal movement of Christ toward every obedient lover; it is the normal course of supreme and blessed love. He could not withhold Himself from a lover. If I do not get manifestations I am not much of a lover. I do not know how it comes about, but the Lord is able to bring Himself in a very real and spiritual manner before us so that our affections get a fresh start, a fresh impulse; the instrument is tuned. But if there is no ivory palace, there are no stringed instruments. You must learn to apply death to what belongs to you naturally as a child of Adam, and you do it in the power of affection because you want a place for Christ. Every bit of ivory has to be secured at the price of death. How much have we secured for Christ at that cost?

We can see how all this gives us a moral basis for the truth of the queen. Christ has companions morally who love righteousness and hate lawlessness; they are marked by such affection that they build ivory palaces and have stringed instruments in them. Put these thoughts together and you will have some idea of what stands connected with the subjective side. In the last part

of the psalm we have kings' daughters, the queen, the daughter of Tyre, and then pre-eminently the king's daughter. It is all the feminine side, the subjective side, what there is in the saints for the heart of Christ. It is wonderful instruction if we want to be for Christ in these last days just before the kingdom comes in publicly. One might say that this psalm speaks of Christ and the assembly; the assembly now comes into the place of the queen and the king's daughter. No doubt, strictly speaking, it applies to Jerusalem; she is to be queen, her name is to be Beulah — married, and God will rejoice over Jerusalem as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride.

Rem At the present time the bride is a city.

CAC Yes, and the queen is a city, the Messiah's queen will be a city, the King must have a city. The assembly has that place now. When John was called to see the bride he was shown a city, teaching us the thought that the bride and the city are put together by the Spirit of God.

Ques Does the city suggest government?

CAC There is no doubt an administrative side to the city, but the thought here is that the queen is for the delight of the King. The assembly comes to be for the satisfaction of Christ in carrying all the features which belong to the city; they are set forth figuratively in the city, but they are what gives the city attractiveness to Christ.

We get first the thought of kings' daughters, suggesting the saints as of royal lineage; we are suitable to Christ because of the exalted character of our lineage. Have we learned to think of ourselves as kings' daughters? Think of the exalted character of the saints as born of God! We have a spiritual lineage which fits us to be in this wonderful relationship to Christ. John says, "*Ye* are of God"; that is our origin. "*Ye* are of God, children, and have overcome them" — the saints are of such lineage that they have power to overcome antichrists. It is interesting to put the different thoughts together. The queen stands in gold of Ophir; lower down her raiment is of wrought gold, and then she is in raiment of embroidery. There are three different thoughts, but all made good in the saints.

Ques What is gold of Ophir?

CAC I thought it suggested glory as conferred by divine grace. In the coming day when Israel will be recognised as the delight of Jehovah she will be brought into the enjoyment of God's favour in Christ; this will result in public glory answering to the gold which will be recognised by the nations around. In christianity the ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit involves that believers are invested with glory which is to shine out in testimony. It is said in

2 Corinthians 3: 11, of this ministry that it subsists in glory. There is thus a subsisting glory about the saints as having received the Spirit as a ministration from God.

The wrought gold is more what is formed in the saints. We receive righteousness and the Spirit absolutely, as the two great blessings which God is serving out to all those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. But wrought gold suggests formation, the work of God which begins when we have received righteousness and the Spirit. If you would like a scripture for wrought gold I would suggest Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3; I do not know a better. There is a strengthening by the Father's Spirit in all the affections of the inner man so that the Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and it is all to apprehend with every believer "what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God. But to him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think, according to the power which works in us ..". Now you have the wrought gold; it is brought into shape by prayer. I believe what is wrought of the Spirit is wrought under deep exercise, and every exercise turns to prayer. Our prayers are the measure of our spiritual exercises, and what is wrought of God is wrought in an atmosphere of prayer. That is where God works. We cannot be divinely wrought by listening to ministry. "He that has wrought us for this very thing is God", 2 Corinthians 5: 5. One asks oneself, How big am I in view of being placed in the heavenly city? That is the measure of how I am divinely wrought. A great many have righteousness and the Spirit, but there is very little exercise and prayer, very little seeking from God, so there is little spiritual formation, only a little bit of pure gold to go into the city; there is nothing in the city but pure gold. How big am I for that city? Just so big as I have been divinely wrought, and nothing goes in but what has been divinely wrought. God is working in saints so that they may be fit material to go into the city.

These two thoughts are helpful, showing how we are invested with divine glory, but also how we become subjects of divine workmanship. Then the third thing is the raiment of embroidery; that brings us to our side. It is wrought stitch by stitch. Revelation 19 tells us it is granted to the bride to be clothed in fine linen, the righteousnesses of the saints. The raiment of embroidery is made by the practical working out in detail of the life of Christ in the saints. Nothing has the character of righteousness but what flows out from the life of Christ in the saints. It is a matter of daily exercise, and this garment is worked out day by day; all that is the product of the life of Christ goes into it, all that has the character of righteousness before God goes into it. It is connected with, "the Spirit life on account of righteousness", Romans 8: 10. The Spirit

has come in to be the power of life so that what is righteous has place with us and that is morally the life of Christ.

There is a divine working in the saints, and that is like wrought gold, but there is a working out in practical result, and that is our side of it.

Ques Is it what the virtuous woman does in Proverbs 31?

CAC She is diligent in the detail of life, stitch by stitch. God would suggest all this to us by way of instruction for the last days, and we have to take it up if we are to realise the portion of the wise in the last days. Psalm 45, is in one sense, the most important of the Maschil Psalms because it deals with the Person of Christ, and with what is for Christ's pleasure.

AN OUTLINE OF THE MASCHIL PSALMS - PSALM 52 (5), 53 (6), 54 (7), 55 (8)

Psalm 52; Psalm 53; Psalm 54; Psalm 55

CAC The general thought that has been before us in reading these Maschil psalms is that we find in them conditions in which the people and the testimony of God will be found in the last days. They are given by the Spirit of God to be a support for faith and for love in the last days before the kingdom is established. It is noticeable that very few of the Psalms and very little scripture is occupied with the kingdom as actually established. The greater part of the Scriptures, including the Psalms, is occupied with exercises and experiences, the sufferings and triumphs of the people of God in days when evil has outwardly the upper hand, and the kingdom is in anticipation.

In the four psalms read tonight we come to the conditions in the presence of which the testimony is to be maintained — faith is the resource. No doubt in principle we have to go through the same exercises as the instructed ones in Israel; it is necessary for us to be wise as it will be for them. It is very important to be instructed so that we take up the testimony of God in an intelligent way. If we have appreciated Christ and what stands in relation to Him according to Psalm 45, we have now to learn in Psalm 52 that we are face to face with the most deadly opposition. The mighty man in verse 1 is in deadly opposition to the people of God. No doubt the psalm refers to Doeg the Edomite; he represents the man that serves the flesh. He was Saul's chief servant, the man who ministers to the flesh. He had no appreciation of God's anointed, and was ready to kill that which had holy and priestly character — he slew eighty-five persons wearing the linen ephod; 1 Samuel 22. He was ready to kill the priests. We are face to face with that mighty man.

In Psalm 45 we have learnt the excellence of Christ; God fills our hearts with composition concerning Him. He excels every other man, and everything glorious stands connected with Him. Now antichrist is dead against that, and we are morally in the times of antichrist "even now", 1 John 2: 18. We are in the presence of many antichrists, though *the* personal antichrist has not yet come. What will keep us in presence of the mighty man? There is a mighty man here in deadly opposition to God's anointed, and to everything that is holy and priestly in character. How are we to be sustained? The way the Lord would sustain us is by making us green olive trees in His house. Nothing short of being spiritual men and women will do in a day like this. An olive tree suggests a spiritual man bearing spiritual fruit; and there is freshness, a *green* olive tree. He is not a visitor to the house, he is planted there in the soil of

God's loving-kindness. The place in which to grow and be fruitful is the soil of God's loving-kindness in God's house. We see the contrast in Psalm 37: 35, "the wicked ... spreading like a green tree in its native soil". That refers to antichrist, who is the full expression of what man can be as growing in his native soil, as growing up from what he can be for himself. The air is full of the spirit of antichrist now, what man can be for himself; what will meet that? Only the character of the spiritual man and woman who are drawing everything from God's loving-kindness and proving what He can be for men. It is men living as Christ did in absolute dependence and trust. Christ proved at every step what God can be for men; He was the green olive tree, but every saint can be one. The very ground that the house stands on is God's loving-kindness.

In the exercises of Psalm 51 we learn the loving-kindness of God. Psalm 45, which is full of Christ and the product of the work of God, necessitates the exercises of Psalm 51, because the more I appreciate Christ, the deeper down I have to go in self-judgment, and there is no deeper exercise in self-judgment than Psalm 51. God does not let anyone off that exercise, but it is in it we learn the loving-kindness of God. There is a man in Psalm 51 full of failure, not only what he has done but what he is, but he learns that the loving-kindness of God can be counted on in the lowest depths; and if it can be counted on there it can be anywhere. Our knowledge of God's loving-kindness is measured by our self-judgment. Peter had to learn what he was capable of, and we all have to; it is a fixed principle with God that we must. Peter did not believe what God said; and the psalmist had probably written many psalms before this, and now he has to go this way that he might learn God and justify Him, so he says, "that thou mayest be justified". A spiritual man is one who has appreciation of Christ and is self-judged. If you put Psalm 45 and Psalm 51 together you get the two sides of a spiritual man — a great appreciation of Christ and deep self-judgment. All the wise have to learn these lessons. I do not mean that we have to commit a great sin to learn it; that is not the deepest way of learning it. We can learn it in the presence of God, and it is to teach us the loving-kindness of God. The text of Psalm 52 is verse 1, "The loving-kindness of God abideth continually", and verse 8, "I will confide in the loving-kindness of God for ever and ever". That is the confidence of the soul.

Ques How would you distinguish between loving-kindness and love?

CAC The loving-kindness of God comes out in relation to conditions in which His people are found. It is a beautiful word, often translated 'mercy', but it is really *desire* or *ardour*. It indicates the warmth of God's disposition towards men that He would delight to be their resource, to be their support in spite of

the creature's sin. His love is behind it, but it is more how He would put Himself at our disposal; He is so kindly and tenderly disposed to men — we should be planted in that. The appreciation of Christ deepens self-judgment and confidence in the loving-kindness of God, then you have a green olive tree in the presence of antichrist. This psalm will be fulfilled in the presence of antichrist, but it can be anticipated now. There are no half measures; we are either growing in our own native soil or planted in the house of Jehovah.

Rem "Abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house", Psalm 36: 8.

CAC Yes. "How precious is thy loving-kindness, O God! So the sons of men take refuge under the shadow of thy wings" (verse 7). That is one of the most beautiful scriptures one could have. The sons of men can come right up to the mercy-seat and put their trust in the wings of Jehovah, and God is so known as the Source of everything that "they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house".

No doubt David went through the experiences that qualified him to be a vessel for God to use; but in principle these psalms apply to us. Without this instruction we cannot stand before the power of antichrist that makes everything of man grown out of his native soil. In the testimony of God the only thing of account is a green olive tree in the house of God, a man who confides in the loving-kindness of God continually.

It is in presence of a Man fairer than the children of men that we learn to judge ourselves. Then we find in Psalm 52, in contrast to the mighty man who grows out of his own soil, the spiritual man, beautifully designated a green olive tree in the house of God, trusting in the loving-kindness of God, drawing everything from God, proving what God can be for man — just as Christ did.

In the next psalm, Psalm 53, we find the universal condition of man is brought to light. Men universally are in such a condition that every influence that emanates from them tends to eat up the people. "Eating up my people as they eat bread" (verse 4) is the character of the influence that emanates from men; it is destructive and pernicious, and it accounts for the captivity of the people of God; they have come under the influence of things that emanate from men. There is a necessity for the captivity to be turned (verse 6). Every one of us has known what it is to come under the influence of what emanates from men; it is a spiritual captivity, and there is a necessity for it to be turned and for salvation to come out of Zion. We all need this experience.

Ques Do you mean the teachings of men?

CAC I was thinking of all influences which have ended in the captivity of the people of God. They began before the apostles left the scene, they come from

men, not from God, and the result is that the whole Christian profession has come into captivity. Just what happened to Israel has happened to the Christian profession, so in sovereign mercy we must be delivered from all that emanates from men. If our joy is not full it is because there is some element of captivity about us. There is a great element about many of us; we are governed inwardly and it affects us outwardly; we can see an amount of outward captivity and we want deliverance in our spirits. "Salvations" (see footnote to N.T.) come out of Zion. In sovereign mercy (Zion speaks of that) God calls attention to something in our walk, or ways, or spirit, or service, or religious associations that is not Himself but emanates from men. God calls attention to it so that salvations may come in one after another to set us free. God will turn the captivity of Jacob and Israel; He has been turning our captivity for the last hundred years so that there might be profound joy in our hearts. We cannot have it unless we have the salvations out of Zion.

Ques Is that why our meetings sometimes lack joy?

CAC Yes. If there were more spiritual joy, what a spring there would be! The great point in the next psalm, Psalm 54, is the freewill offering and praise; priestly service is carried on. No power of the enemy can hinder that, but, if we have not power through the captivity being turned, we are not free for service.

Rem Paul in Philippians 3 was free.

CAC Yes. "*We* are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus". That is like Psalm 54. There is a man there whose captivity has been perfectly turned; salvation has liberated him from everything. Now these things are essential for the wise, we have to take them up in personal exercise and spiritual power.

In Psalm 54: 6 the point reached is, "I will freely sacrifice", or, 'sacrifice a free-will offering'. "I will praise thy name, O Jehovah, because it is good". The power of the enemy is set to hinder God from getting His portion; there is violence on the enemy's part. Our brethren, the remnant, will have to suffer that in a terrible degree, and we may yet have to. In recent years the enemy has sought to hinder by violent intrusion, and we may have more of it; we ought to be prepared to face the possibility of the enemy being allowed to hinder in that way. Before the church goes she may have to pass through exercises that will qualify her to sympathise with suffering brethren of the time to come.

Ques Do you mean outwardly?

CAC Yes. Satan will do anything to interfere with the service of God. But I think we have to remember that the service of God is never to cease in the darkest and direst time of the great tribulation; and the service is to go on now. We have to think of the dignity, the holy privilege of being allowed to stand by night in the house of God, and carry on His service and lift up our hands. We ought to think more of God's service; we are often thinking of our blessing instead of the sacrifice of praise. I think all these things are like the sap of the olive tree; they are the activities of the Spirit of Christ. The enemy is bringing pressure to bear so that the service of God may be hindered. Have you not noticed on Lord's day morning how something will happen to upset your spirit? Satan would like that, and we have to see to it that we do not succumb to his efforts.

Ques In what sense is praise sacrifice?

CAC It is bringing before God what He finds delight in, bringing Christ before Him. Even in our private devotions we ought to think of it; we are so much on the line of our need. I find I go to pray, and one thing after another comes in in connection with my need, and state of soul, and service, and time goes on and I have to pull myself up and say, Is there to be nothing for God, all for me? I begin to think I must have a sacrifice, and I think what I can say to God about Christ; then one taps the spring of divine power and joy, one passes over to what is sacrificial. The service of God is connected with magnifying Him in presence of all that He has disclosed Himself to be. The enemy would like to bring some influence to stop that. Why are there so many silent brothers? The enemy cannot destroy, but he knows that if he stops the service of God he practically destroys, and the wise have to learn not to allow the service to be stopped from any source. It is our highest privilege, and it is that in which the glory of God is bound up. The glory of the assembly is that it is a shrine for God's glory. In touching the blessedness of the house of God there would be a great impulse. We are weak because in private prayer every day there is so little praise; but the joy of captivity being turned would lead to delight in God and there would be more praise. What an extraordinary thing it is to forget our exercises and allow our hearts to dwell adoringly on the loving-kindness of God, and on the beauties and perfections of Christ! If we did this in private what would it be when the assembly came together! One can hardly imagine it.

The next psalm, Psalm 55, is the deepest exercise of all in one sense; it is the exercise of church troubles, which come from inside. Many here tonight can bear witness that they have gone through deeper sorrow and exercise about church troubles than anything else. Did you ever wish you had wings like a

dove to fly away and be at rest? All these troubles are what you get *in* the city (verse 9) — see also verses 10 and 11. They are assembly troubles. The remnant will have internal troubles in the day to come which in one sense will be worse than the outward. "For it is not an enemy that hath reproached me — then could I have borne it; neither is it he that hateth me that hath magnified himself against me — then would I have hidden myself from him; But it was thou, a man mine equal, mine intimate, my familiar friend ... We who held sweet intercourse together. To the house of God we walked amid the throng" (verses 12 - 14). It is the brethren who have failed you, and that is the keenest sorrow of all — many could bear witness that they have gone through sleepless nights over this, more than they did over anything else. We get the remedy in verses 22 and 23 — confidence in God.

The psalm refers to the time of Absalom's rebellion when he stole the hearts of the people. A plausible, flattering tongue was exercising an influence among the people of God, contrary to the truth of God. Probably Ahithophel was the familiar friend. We meet this sometimes; a man we consider as one enquiring of the word of God and speaking as an oracle — and yet he fails and becomes an adversary. What a grief! A most weighty brother and yet he has failed us! We have to be prepared for these things; they belong to the exercise of the last days. We have to be prepared for trouble "in the city" and "in the midst"; and we have to be prepared for the defection of brethren who have helped us and given us the counsel of God. What can we do? "Cast thy burden on Jehovah, and *he* will sustain thee: he will never suffer the righteous to be moved ... as for me, I will confide in thee" (verses 22, 23). That gives comfort and encouragement. We have to learn the lesson of confidence in God, He will never allow the righteous to be moved; they will be carried through every church trouble and escape the influence of Ahithophel; they will be carried right through.

AN OUTLINE OF THE MASCHIL PSALMS - PSALM 74 (9), 78 (10), 88 (11), 142 (12)

Psalm 74; Psalm 78; Psalm 88; Psalm 89; Psalm 142

CAC The first psalm, Psalm 74, that we read has remarkable reference to the assembly — "Remember thine assembly, which thou hast purchased of old, which thou hast redeemed to be the portion of thine inheritance" (verse 2), "Everything in the sanctuary hath the enemy destroyed" (verse 3), "Thine adversaries roar in the midst of thy place of assembly" (verse 4), "And now they break down its carved work altogether, with hatchets and hammers. They have set on fire thy sanctuary, they have profaned the habitation of thy name to the ground" (verses 6, 7).

This is a psalm that brings out in the most striking way the desolation of God's assembly, God's sanctuary. We have to feel it; we are living in days when the language is as appropriate as it ever could be in Israel. It is a great point of spiritual progress when we realise the present state of ruin, looking at things in a spiritual way. In an outward way it is not a state of ruin; there are magnificent buildings, beautiful services, large congregations; but if we are to take account of things spiritually we are surrounded with a most dreadful state of desolation. The christian profession today has the name of God and of Christ attached to and connected with it, but what about the spiritual element? If we gather up from Holy Scripture the spiritual elements connected with God's assembly, His temple, His sanctuary, we learn the holiness of these things as set up at the beginning. If we get a spiritual estimate of God's assembly, temple and sanctuary, we shall see that the present state of things exactly answers to this psalm. The holy things are profaned; the service of God is profaned, it is carried on for the pleasure of man in a way that commends itself to men and all the beautiful spiritual ornamentations are broken down — "They break down its carved work" — things were set up with beautiful ornamentation. God's assembly is here and all the things spoken of have their place, but in the hands of men they have been profaned and their holy character lost. Where is the holiness? It has often been pointed out that we get the adversary within and the enemy without. There have been destructive influences operating against the assembly from without, but the most deadly influences are from within. Think of how the assembly was ornamented at the beginning with all the gifts in the distribution of the Spirit, gifts of an ascended Christ; and then all the fruitful activities of spiritual affections in the saints. What a beauty of holiness, what a fervency of love there was! The assembly was full of spiritual beauty and ornamentation, but

the enemy went to work to break it down, and instead of spiritual elements material elements were set up. So in the christian profession today every part of the truth is imitated and put in a material, instead of a spiritual, form. People talk of a church; they mean a material building. There is no such thought in Scripture. It is always an assembly of living persons. The whole spiritual beauty of the thought of the assembly is destroyed, broken down; and bricks and stones are looked at as a church. The Lord's supper in its simplicity and beauty is God's means of convening the assembly, but instead of the saints coming together in the beauty of the assembly it has disappeared publicly. The enemy's effort has been to introduce natural and material elements instead of spiritual. If we could get hold of the fact that God's house is spiritual, and all the elements are spiritual, it would be the greatest help to us, and we should see how that which is spiritual has been profaned and destroyed in the public profession. I think the divine remedy and refuge is brought out very beautifully in these psalms. We have to watch that we are cultivating what is spiritual and discarding those things that have led to the state of christendom. I remember saying long ago to J.B.S. that I had found in my heart the germ of every kind of corruption and departure; we have to learn that. If we give place to it, it will destroy every spiritual element, and obliterate all the spiritual beauty that attaches to God's assembly. We have not to look at what others are doing, but we must guard against all these elements that have come out publicly in christendom, for they are in each of our hearts naturally.

I think we have to learn according to Psalm 78 how God falls back on His own sovereignty when everything publicly is a failure amongst His people: in sovereign mercy He secures everything from His own side. Psalm 78 is a parable: "I will open my mouth in a parable" (verse 2); it answers exactly to Matthew 13 where it is quoted. It is very remarkable that the Spirit of God has linked this psalm with Matthew 13, where the Lord expounds the parable of the sower and then gives the similitudes of the kingdom. First from verse 24 the parable of the good seed being sown and the enemy coming and sowing darnel amongst the wheat; and then in verse 31 another parable of the grain of mustard seed "which a man took and sowed in his field; which is less indeed than all seeds, but when it is grown is greater than herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches". Then the next verse is the parable of the leaven, "which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until it had been all leavened". And then there is a parenthesis (verses 34, 35): "All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and without a parable he did not speak to them, so that that should be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying, I will open my

mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the world's foundation". At this point the Lord brings in Psalm 78, and after that He speaks of the treasure and the pearl. The psalm is an Old Testament parable; it shows how everything goes to the bad in the hands of men. The divine testimony and the law as committed to men only result in departure and unfaithfulness; and when that is fully manifested the Lord awakes and takes things in hand, and He starts everything from Zion (verses 65 - 68). He has a chosen place and a chosen Man, and everything works out from the divine side in connection with sovereign mercy and the integrity and skilfulness of Christ (verse 72). At that point you can turn from the history of departure.

We see the history of departure in Matthew 13. It begins with the enemy sowing darnel; and then there is the mustard seed; that is what is of God taking an unnatural place in the world and becoming a shelter for wicked spirits; finally the whole is leavened — it is a picture of the enemy's work. God begins and then the enemy works till the whole is leavened. This is exactly what is going on now; darnel has been sown, and the christian profession has taken this extraordinary place in the world as a great and imposing thing when it was never intended to be anything but small; and there is the corrupting influence of the woman who puts in leaven until the whole is leavened. After this there are the treasure, the pearl and the good fish. This comes in on the line of mount Zion and David, the principle of sovereign mercy.

I think Psalm 78 is connected with God's testimony: "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children" (verse 5). It is a question of God's testimony. Now we all admit that in the matter of individual blessing it must be sovereign mercy, but when it is a question of God's testimony it must be sovereign mercy, too. It all works out in connection with Christ, so at the end of this psalm we get a chosen place and a chosen Man; it is a question of the integrity of His heart and the skilfulness of His hands. Christ is, like David, feeding the people of God according to the integrity of His heart. Do you think He would fail to feed them with every divine food that God has provided? He has such integrity of heart in connection with divine feeding. You may find servants who keep back some food and do not serve out the whole truth, but that would never be so with Christ. If we put ourselves into His hands we shall be well fed and guided. Our security is to be fed according to the integrity of His heart and guided by the skilfulness of His hands; we cannot make a creed or doctrine that would afford security.

It is a great comfort to me to think that whatever has been for God in relation to His testimony has been the product of sovereign mercy, and because of that

it will never fail — there is something there. We might get discouraged if we look at the first similitudes of Matthew 13, the enemy's work bringing in bad material, and in result things taking public shape and becoming leavened. But the Lord says, 'I will tell you something else; there is a treasure and a pearl'. How full of instruction these great principles are!

In verse 65 we had a striking figure of God's intervention, "Then the Lord awoke as one out of sleep" — there has been something like that in the history of the church. The Lord has awakened to show His own hand and His way of working. And He is showing the result of His intervention, that everything that abides and has value is the product of His sovereign mercy which has been secured in a risen Christ, and nothing can invalidate that. Mount Zion refers to that, to what is secured in a risen Christ. God has had to disown everything that had been the result of human failure, but, if He disowns that, there is something else that He chooses — mount Zion. It is our privilege to move on the line of what is of God, and in that way we shall find resource and strength. We are not called to put the confusion right or to accommodate ourselves to it, but to go on with what is of God.

Rem We get guidance in Psalm 32 also.

CAC That brings out the great principles of God's favour and leading. He will never fail to give His people spiritual guidance when they want it. People think many are ready for it who do not get it. I do not believe that there are any souls prepared for divine leading who do not get it; when a soul is ready it surely will get it.

In Psalm 88 we get a more personal exercise; it is the most hopeless psalm in the book. J.N.D. said that at one time it was the only scripture that was any help to him because he saw that someone had been as low as that before him. It was the only part of scripture that tallied with his experience, and if any man had been as low there was help for *him*. Psalm 88 is the Old Testament Romans 7, it is the experience of utter weakness in oneself; the man in it is as good as dead. It is a solemn experience and instruction, but in principle we need it in the last days. We need to know, not only the public breakdown as in Psalm 74, but that in regard to God we are as complete a mass of weakness as if we were dead. We are looking at it in connection with the testimony, and we have to learn that in ourselves we have the weakness of death; it is not wilfulness here but the weakness of death. It is learned in the presence of God.

Psalm 88 and Psalm 89 are like Romans 7 and 8. There is a learning of utter weakness in Psalm 88 to prepare us to appreciate Psalm 89: "I will sing of the loving-kindness of Jehovah for ever; with my mouth will I make known thy

faithfulness from generation to generation. For I said, Loving-kindness shall be built up for ever; in the very heavens wilt thou establish thy faithfulness". The whole of this psalm is built up on loving-kindness and faithfulness: each are mentioned seven times in the psalm. If you have learned your utter weakness in Psalm 88 you come to loving-kindness and faithfulness in God. What a stay to the heart to learn these things as divine instruction! We have all to take up these exercises and God brings us to it. That is why we have church difficulties. Every exercised person who has faced church difficulties has learnt his utter weakness; nothing would discover our weakness to us like assembly exercises or difficulties. It is God's way that we should learn our weakness in order that we should fall back on what is established in heaven — God's faithfulness and loving-kindness.

Ques Is it the individual or the company learning it?

CAC I think we have, every one, to learn it individually. Paul's thorn for the flesh brought death on him, and it is on that basis that God can show His power. If there is a bit of activity of what belongs to me it excludes divine power. We all like to be strong on that line, but God brings in power by reducing us to the weakness of death, and then He opens out His loving-kindness and faithfulness, and shows how He has laid help on One who is mighty. "Then thou spakest in vision of thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon a mighty one" (verse 19). Now we learn God's covenant with Christ — God has made His covenant with David — Christ is the subject of the covenant and anointing, and He is One who is mighty; there is no weakness to interfere with the carrying out of divine pleasure in Christ. There are certain engagements on God's part with reference to Christ that cannot be interfered with or invalidated. For instance the kingdom is secured to Christ by covenant; God has said, "Ask of me, and I will give thee nations for an inheritance, and for thy possession the ends of the earth", Psalm 2: 8. The kingdom is secured to Christ, the divine pledge is given, "Sit at my right hand, until I put thine enemies as footstool of thy feet", Psalm 110: 1. Then the priesthood is secured: "Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec". All is secured to Christ. What a comfort to see that Christ is anointed with the holy oil and is mighty! Nothing committed to Him can ever fail, it will be carried through. What a comfort in the presence of the gross and shameful failure that marks the Christian profession to be able to fall back on such a covenant! Christ came here to do the will of God when the whole sacrificial system had failed. He came to do the work and could say, "I have glorified *thee* on the earth, I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it". All this makes God's loving-kindness and faithfulness as secured in Christ very precious to the heart. We are able to

retire from all the breakdown of the Christian profession in which we are involved and responsible; we can retire from our utter weakness into the region of the Spirit and of God's loving-kindness and faithfulness, and of the ability of Christ to give effect to the whole pleasure of God. What a resource in these last days! This is great instruction for us.

This will be the provision for the remnant of Israel in a coming day; they will have to take up these lessons in the tribulation in presence of the antichrist and the beast, in far more terrible conditions than we do. We have to learn them now in our conditions, which in the last days will become worse, but what a resource to fall back on!

The last Maschil psalm is Psalm 142. It shows the extreme point to which any faithful saint can be reduced; he is left without any companion, and no man cares for his soul. But Jehovah is his refuge. This exactly corresponds with Paul's experience in 2 Timothy: "no man stood with me". It contemplates the very worst conditions there could be; it is conceivable that things might be so bad that we might have to stand alone. It was the Lord's portion: "they all forsook him". This psalm contemplates the direst distress in which a faithful saint could be found; but the Lord has pledged Himself to the assembly that we shall never have to walk alone. 2 Timothy is the pledge; we are told to "withdraw from iniquity" and separate from vessels to dishonour and to "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". There is a divine pledge to us that we shall never be reduced to walking alone. There will always be those following righteousness, faith, love, peace, and calling on the Lord out of a pure heart.