

Charles Andrew
COATES

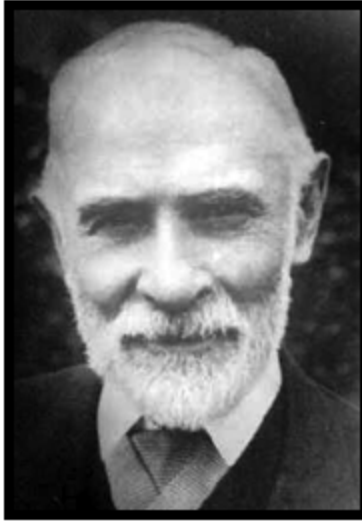
V25 Outline of Corinthians

Charles Andrew
COATES

V25 Outline of Corinthians

Charles Andrew Coates

V25 Outline of Corinthians



Produced from GoodTeaching.org
on 24-Feb-2026

1 CORINTHIANS 1 (FIRST READING)

1 Corinthians 1:9

CAC One feels the importance of connecting the thought of the fellowship with the calling of God.

Ques Would it of necessity detach us from every other association?

CAC Yes, and it would lead us to see that the partnership and common interests which we enjoy together are in no sense voluntary; they cannot be taken up or laid down at pleasure.

Ques Do we see the calling in Abraham?

CAC Abraham is the conspicuous example in Scripture of calling. "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham", Acts 7: 2. Country, kindred and father's house all had to be left; the truth of fellowship involves that.

Ques Is there a call in the gospel?

CAC Yes. The call to the fellowship comes through the gospel. In this chapter there is a call to look at the brethren in the light of divine calling, to take stock of the saints, to look at them as they really are. It is very important to take up the fellowship from the side of the divine calling.

Rem "Consider your calling, brethren ..." (verses 26 - 29). Have a look round and see what the saints are like.

CAC "Foolish things"! We sometimes press the thought that we should look at the saints from the side of the calling but the other side is 'nonentities'! That is the sort of people. The calling of God is sufficient to dignify people like that. In the light of the calling they are dignified. Nothing is of real value but what is the fruit of the calling of God.

Ques And that is sovereignty?

CAC Yes. If I ignore a believer I am out of harmony with God. The fellowship is a matter of light. Both Paul and John put it that way. It is not mere information but light in the soul. Take the Jew; he desires a sign; he has not got light. The Greek seeks after wisdom, but Christ preached as the crucified One becomes to those who are called God's wisdom and God's power. That is light in the soul.

Rem The calling of God gives us divine light.

CAC It did that to Abraham. If the God of glory appears to a man there is light.

Peter says that God "has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light", 1 Peter 2: 9. It is "wonderful light" that God has called us into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The world is a sphere of darkness. "What fellowship of light with darkness?", 2 Corinthians 6: 14. The apostle uses different words there: "For what participation is there between righteousness and lawlessness? ... and what consent of Christ with Beliar ... ?" but fellowship is connected with light and darkness. Fellowship is largely a question of divine light. Our fellowship together is determined by the amount of spiritual light we have. "His Son" gives you the full revelation of God; God has fully come out. "His Son" means a great deal to God. We do not think enough of the joy that it was to God to have at last a Person in manhood to reveal Him. "His Son" is God's side; "our Lord" shows that there is refuge from lawlessness.

Rem In 1 John 1: 7 it says, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another".

CAC That bond is established down here in the midst of darkness, formed in people by the shining of the light in Christ. God is faithful in relation to the fellowship (see chapter 10 where it is our individual pathway and His faithfulness to us in our weakness).

We want to recognise the truth of the fellowship. God is faithful in regard of the fellowship; He will not fail us or leave us to our own resources. It is an immense comfort to us in conditions of weakness. We have to do with the fidelity of God, not of the brethren; we have to do with the faithfulness of God, carried through successfully by Him. The bond of the fellowship is the Person, a living Person able to hold us; indeed He does hold His saints.

Rem There is no lowering of the standard.

CAC No. "His Son" sets forth, firstly the full light of the outshining of God; we are called into a circle where the effulgence of God shines in the Person of His Son; and, secondly, that God has established all the pleasure of His love in a Man. He has found in His Son an answer to all His love and He is restful in it. 'Nonentities' is one side of it and finishes that side. God comes out in the calling and lights them up with celestial splendour. What light when the holy splendour of God shines in! We are blessed in His Son; God says, 'I will bless you in Him'. The fellowship subsists at this moment and every called one is in it. Many do not recognise it but we want to do so. It is an immense loss not to recognise it for then we are the losers. All saints are essential to the fellowship. If we felt that we could not do without them, and told the Lord so, perhaps we would get them.

“Our Lord” — it is a wonderful thing to escape from lawlessness; it should be a real exercise with us to do so. To accept that in the fellowship nothing can rule but the will of God and that it is the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord is the language of subjection. One of the great features of the fellowship is that we can really say, ‘our Lord’. He is the supreme One and it is such a wonderful lordship. The kind of authority is a lordship of blessing.

The first sense you get of it is in Romans 5, that from justification up to eternal life all is administered “through our Lord Jesus Christ”. You are subdued because you are enriched. You are never subdued otherwise. Divine authority and rule have come out in the way of blessing. Thank God for it! There is everything in me contrary to my enjoyment of it but subjection to the Lord ensures it. If I am hindered in the enjoyment of it I am not owning the lordship of Christ because He could deliver me from what hinders. Nothing else does. It is a great thing to call on the name of the Lord. He is able to command and subdue us so that we are liberated to enjoy the blessedness. It is a great thing when we say ‘Lord’ to Jesus. It requires the power of the Spirit. There is virtue in Him. The Lord touched the leper and cleansed him; I suppose we have all known His touch in that way. He put the link on from His side, but when we put the link on from our side and say ‘Lord’ there is virtue in Him for me and the benefit of His delivering power is known. You cannot afford to be insubject for you lose the liberty and the support. God has called us to walk together in the blessedness of all this. We are all partners together.

Ques What would you say as to the fellowship of His death?

CAC 1 Corinthians 10 gives us the character of the fellowship, the particular way in which it separates us from the idolatrous world. The Corinthians did not understand the character of the fellowship.

Ques What is the fellowship of the blood of Christ?

CAC “The communion of the blood of the Christ” would show that all blessing has come through death. It puts you, as to the source of all your blessing and joy, outside this world. “The communion of the body of the Christ” is His dead body clearly. It gives us the character of what we enjoy together and the measure of our separation from the idolatrous world. It is the enjoyment of things that come to us through the precious death of Christ.

‘Thou dost make us taste the blessing,
Soon to fill a world of bliss’. (394:5)

Rem I suppose the blessings themselves are not unfolded in chapter 10 but rather how they come to us.

CAC It is not the actual Lord's supper there but the moral import of it. That all Christians do break bread is taken for granted but the moral character of it is shown. There is a great gulf fixed between all that we enjoy in the fellowship and what is in the circle of the world.

Rem "Ye cannot drink the Lord's cup, and the cup of demons: ye cannot partake of the Lord's table, and of the table of demons", 1 Corinthians 10: 21.

Rem The question is raised there, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?"

CAC It is a serious thing to play fast and loose with the fellowship. The Lord is jealous. If we become careless and slack He does not. If we become careless and slack we lose the value at the present time of all that we have been called to. The fellowship is the great feature of the present moment; we shall not have it in heaven. The Lord valued fellowship when He was here: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer". It is most touching. He valued the companionship of the disciples here. The privileges of the fellowship are not eternal but are limited by time. We ought to value it much more than we do because it is not eternal. Let us hold to it for we shall never have it again. The Lord cherished the peculiar bond that there was between Himself and His own on earth. "Ye are they who have persevered with me in my temptations", Luke 22: 28. His own walked with Him and He valued it. The fellowship is that of the body of Christ, the One who has died here. It has been seen that there is no place in this world for God; hence we should not seek recognition here. We start out with that because the fellowship is the fellowship of the body of Christ.

The Lord sets the highest possible value on what is of or for Himself; He never undervalues it. If we are provoking the Lord to jealousy, how can He kiss us with the kisses of His mouth on the Lord's day? How can we know His embrace of love then, if through the week we have not been true to the fellowship?

There is a character of things in the fellowship which is inconceivably great. It is the direct fruit of divine calling and the calling is the fruit of divine love and brings dignity with it. Two can have it but one alone cannot; you must take account of your brethren. You could not have a partnership with less than two members. We are to be enlarged towards our brethren, "using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace", Ephesians 4: 3. The way we comport ourselves with our brethren will be on that line as we recognise what is the effect of divine calling.

"To those that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ God's power and God's wisdom", 1 Corinthians 1: 24. If I can help a Christian to recognise that, I shall

help him towards the fellowship. We are very much dependent on the Lord to give us access to souls. If I can approach a soul in the grace of the Lord I may do him good. I must first get access and then use the access to further the fellowship. Darkness hinders it. One covets the ability to bring a little ray of divine light of Christ as the wisdom of God and the power of God to a soul. God is operating in every one of His called ones that Christ may become to them the power and the wisdom of God. It is good to have divine light shining on us and doing its work.

1 CORINTHIANS 1 (SECOND READING)

1 Corinthians 1:17-31

Ques Why is it said that Christ sent Paul to preach?

CAC I suppose Christ being brought in personally would have a great bearing on the apostle's service. The anointed One being brought in did not leave any room for what was diverse in character. The apostle had in mind the true meaning of the cross of Christ, and he kept Christ and the cross always in mind in his service. He received his commission from the exalted and glorified One. "Not in wisdom of word" — you cannot talk people into being christians.

It would seem that the cross was not presented prominently in the preaching in the Acts but that Christ was presented personally. It was brought in there once to accentuate the guilt of men who crucified Him. The cross is brought in prominently in Corinthians and Galatians when there has been departure. Where there is a slipping away from Christ and the Spirit and from divine grace, the truth of the cross becomes very necessary as the power of recovery. They had reverted largely to the wrong man and Paul does not come down on them in a withering way, but, in the skill of divine love, he showed how the cross had governed his own service among them. They had been so affected by it that he knew they would understand and he appealed to the divine work in them that could receive what was presented. The cross governed his service and he would give no place to man in the flesh. The gospel does not address itself to man's intellect but to his conscience and heart. There is nothing more needful today than the preaching of the cross, especially among those who believe.

It is very necessary for us as believers to consider the cross and that Christ was crucified — not only that He died but the kind of death that He suffered. The Lord referred to His being lifted up and the Spirit adds that He spoke of "what death he was about to die", John 12: 33. It was the death of the cross; He died in the position of the utmost reproach. There is no death that is so expressive of reproach and before God it speaks of a curse "Cursed is every one hanged upon a tree", Galatians 3: 13. Now we have to come to it that that is our place, because if Christ, God's anointed Man, is there, He is not there for anything in Himself. It is the only thing we can boast in: "far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world", Galatians 6: 14. What a practical thing it became to Paul! It is no good to speak about the cross and then exhibit fallen man in my words and ways. It was myself who was judged publicly in the cross of Christ; it was not a private but a public matter. If it took hold of me as

it did of Paul it would powerfully affect my service, for that is what is in mind — the cross as a regulating power that would shut out the flesh in the service. The apostle reminds them how he could move in perfect liberty in his service by bringing in the cross. By his learning he could have silenced the philosophers but he took a line that would have been contemptible in the eyes of the learned Greeks and which was a scandal in the eyes of the Jews. Such a man should be crucified himself, they would say.

It is touching that he does not bring the cross to bear on them to crush them. He reminds them of how he served. He would not have the cross emptied of its meaning. As having learned Christ as God's wisdom and God's power we ought to be very sympathetic with this ministry. The power of the cross has shown that not one single bit of me can remain before God, and I am thankful.

Rem It is a relief to turn away from myself to Christ.

CAC It is very important when christendom is so characterised by Judaism. The Messiah on the cross is the death-blow to the aspirations of the Jew. The religious man is absolutely rejected by God and this is seen in the cross. The cross is the power of God to free me from everything connected with myself naturally. If you could get all the wisdom of the world in one man it would not help him one jot as a christian. God has set all aside in the cross, the wisdom of the world and the religion of the world. It is part of His definite plan to "destroy the wisdom of the wise, and set aside the understanding of the understanding ones", 1 Corinthians 1: 19. It is only by the calling of God that we come into it, not because of any good disposition on our part. Without God's calling we should have no appreciation of Christ or understanding of the cross, so we do not seek to work on what man is. The cross is God's estimate of man after the flesh.

Rem In Romans 8 it is said, "God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh".

CAC Yes, it is publicly condemned for those who are called of God, as those at Corinth were. God had called them Himself, and the result was that Christ was precious as the wisdom and power of God. Paul was encouraged to labour at Corinth because the Lord had said, "I have much people in this city". To everyone not called of God it is a scandal, or foolishness, to tell him he is under death and the judgment of God. What we are is a deeper matter than what we have done. There is a fountain of evil in ourselves and many spend their lives in fruitless struggles to improve themselves. When this is faced and accepted nothing remains before God but Christ, and the believer finds everything in Him, God's anointed Man, as we read: "Of him are ye in Christ

Jesus, who has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption". So there is a complete furnishing for the bankrupt sinner who did not know what to do. He finds everything he could desire in Christ. It is most emancipating! It is the greatest wisdom too — there is no philosophy like it! Philosophy tries to patch men up, but all is worthless for man is under death. It is a simple gospel which is true, and angels have been wondering at it for two thousand years. By divine grace we are linked up with the wisdom and power of God. The man with whom I was linked has been publicly judged in the cross of Christ so that I may be linked up in grace with the Man Christ Jesus. By the mighty power of God the saved ones, the called ones, believers are taken out of Adam and planted in Christ. There is nothing left but to glorify God and that is liberty, for the service of God is in view.

In chapter 2 we have the Spirit, but the truth of the cross is necessary if we are to get the gain of the Spirit. I think I ask every day for more of the gain of the Spirit but it is only possible as the power of the cross is applied to us by God. There is no need why any christian should walk according to the flesh for five minutes — we are under no obligation to do so. The divine furnishing is that we are not debtors to the flesh. If it does act for a moment it should be judged immediately; then we can go on.

Verses 26 - 29 show how it works out practically. Look round and see who is called. God is set to put aside anything that would give distinction to man. It is not said, 'not any high-born' but "not many". If He does choose such He brings them down in their thoughts. "God has chosen the foolish things of the world, that he may put to shame the wise ... the ignoble things of the world, and the despised, has God chosen, and things that are not, that he may annul the things that are". He is really referring to persons. We have to learn what nonentities we are, and God says, 'I have chosen you to show what I can do for you; I will take you out of all that you are by nature, and put you in Christ Jesus, and then you will have nothing to do but to praise Me!' It is a profound comfort to me. God will bring to nothing all that men boast in. If there is anything we fancy in ourselves, God is set to crush it, for He wants us to boast in Christ Jesus.

1 CORINTHIANS 1 AND 2

1 Corinthians 1:30-31; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

CAC God has set up His saints in Christ Jesus, not in themselves but in another Man, and all that God has given us is in Christ. The Corinthians were very small in it for they were babes in Christ and understood very little of what was theirs in Christ. All ministry is to make us acquainted with the great realities that are true in Christ. It regards the saints as the subject of God's work and according to that their blessing is secured in Christ Jesus, the glorified Man at God's right hand. The first thing on our side is that we "reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus", Romans 6: 11. Most christians understand that they are blessed through Him, but it is so important to know that God has brought in a new Head and that all believers are transferred in the grace of God from Adam to Christ; we have to learn it. These four things (wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption) are all in Christ.

Ques How would these things apply to a man like the thief on the cross?

CAC The value of them was all applied through pure grace though he did not understand it. Very few believers do but it does not affect the fact that it is all complete on the divine side; it is the divinely given status of the saints of God. The thief could go to paradise, the very highest place, and be perfectly fit to be there. He had cast himself off: "we indeed justly", and then, "this man has done nothing amiss", Luke 23: 41. He could not understand it then, but when he comes out in his glorified body it will be manifest to the whole universe that he is in Christ. The only thing that I can boast in is what God has done. He caused the great work of atonement to be accomplished by His Son, He has blessed us in Him and put to our account all that He has secured in Christ. The great thought of wisdom is resource.

The work of Christ upon the cross has met the whole situation perfectly under the eye of God and it cannot be improved upon.

Ques Why did he not wish to know anything among them but "Jesus Christ, and him crucified"?

CAC He saw the danger of their thinking that christianity had come in to be attached to man after the flesh. He had shut out of his consciousness everything but Christ and Him crucified in his service at Corinth. He would not introduce any mere human element in his preaching. The apostles were intelligent speakers who adapted their words to those whom they were addressing. Peter said, "Give heed to my words", Acts 2: 14. Stephen's

masterly outline was understood by himself intelligently, and he was a suitable vessel used of God. Every preacher ought to have exercise as to the people he is addressing; he must speak to his audience and meet the thoughts that are in their hearts in a spiritual way. So the preaching of the gospel should be right in its beginning. Paul had an object in view — that their “faith might not stand in men’s wisdom, but in God’s power”, and every exercised soul wants what is of God. Every true soul says: ‘Whether it makes a fool of me or everyone else, I want to move on that line’.

1 CORINTHIANS 5

1 Corinthians 5:7

CAC My thoughts have been turned to this scripture as thinking of what it must have been to the apostle Paul as he wrote it, and what he would have it suggest to those who read it — to all of us. He does not limit it at all; he says “our passover, Christ”; it is not limited to Egypt, the wilderness, or even the land. He must have summed up in his thoughts the whole truth of the passover as glorified by our Lord Jesus Christ in the upper room. I suppose we have all considered how the truth of the passover is a living and growing thing in the Scriptures — not like a thing delivered once for all and left in its primary elements, but a great divine conception that develops every time you look at it; it expands; its climax is in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. You get the full thought in the upper room with the Lord and His disciples. It is an institution so vast that it takes in the whole of His work. One could certainly not cover the whole field in one reading but I have in my mind to suggest a few thoughts that may be followed up. In Egypt it was a question of the imminent judgment of God (Exodus 12). Egypt, represented by the firstborn, is under judgment. There is no moral difference between Israel and Egypt; if a difference were to be made it had to be made from God’s side. He came in and made a difference: He put all the value of the passover between His people and His holy judgment. He made them eat the flesh of the lamb so that they might be nourished in the wonderful self-sacrificing love set forth in the passover. It was the righteousness of God revealed in the way of grace and love so that all their fears might be removed and they might be secured for God’s pleasure. They never kept the passover again in quite the same way; the destroying angel was never outside again.

JHB They ate it in haste, did they not, and in readiness to depart?

CAC Yes. They were going out; they were strengthened to go out. That is a very great lesson we should learn. The world is under judgment and we with it. Christ has come in to be the passover and has been sacrificed, so that it has become God’s opportunity to come out in righteous grace.

JHB Do you think we are apt to forget what it is intended to result in?

CAC That is very true. It is very important to get the good of what was in the mind of God in it. He did not open it all out on the first page. Really, from the divine side the passover cleared the ground so that God could bring out all that was in His heart.

JHB Exodus 12: 11 describes how they were to eat it; it is "Jehovah's Passover".

CAC Yes, He is moving; this is the first step in a great undertaking that He has set Himself to accomplish (Exodus 23: 17, 18) and that thought is emphasised in the giving of the law (Exodus 34: 24, 25). That seems to emphasise what you were saying, so that when the people were in covenant relationship, it is not "your lamb", it is "my sacrifice", "my feast"; and you get what is not mentioned in Egypt, "the fat"; that is a great advance. When you come to think of it as "my feast" you bring in all the pleasure of God in Christ and His death, so that the fat necessarily comes in — it was all for God; that is the suggestion of how it develops. It seems that when they came into the wilderness the passover became to God the ground on which He could take up His dwelling among them, so that almost the very first thing after the setting up of the tabernacle is that they have to keep the passover. God would take up His dwelling in the midst of His people. It is a great thing to think of the passover on the divine side — not only that it shelters me, but that it was the thought of God to dwell amongst His people according to all the value of Christ, what God calls "my sacrifice". It involves infinitely more than we can take in. One of the sweetest thoughts as we approach God is that He has more in Christ than we know; it is beyond our comprehension but not beyond our adoration. The fat is all the blessed excellence of Christ as God can appreciate Him; He has brought us to His habitation according to all the excellence of Christ. If God passes over, it is in view of dwelling; God wants to be near to us. It is not our dwelling with God, that is a most wonderful thing, but it is more wonderful that God should want to dwell with us, and dwell with us in all the perfection of what He finds in Christ. And it is "among the children of Israel"; it is not merely an individual matter; it all comes out when we are together.

JHB Does not movement come in then, God says, "I will walk among you", Leviticus 26: 12?

CAC Was it not forty-nine days before the tabernacle moved? So we get the setting up of the tabernacle in Exodus 40. Then the keeping of the passover immediately follows; then a period when the service of the sanctuary is carried out. The thing is set up from the point of view of service; then there is movement; this thought of the passover shows how God moves. If we want to move with God we must move with Him reverently, I would say; it is no pleasure to God to walk alone.

JHB Then they made their first journey.

CAC Yes; sometimes all the people of God have to wait, they cannot move forward, as in the matter of Miriam (Numbers 12: 15). It is very gracious of God to wait, and it is a demand on His people to learn to wait, but it is not normal. Numbers 9: 6 - 8 records one of these intuitive exercises that God delights in; there was no command that anyone who was defiled by the dead should not eat the passover; some of the most striking things in scripture were done without any commandment. Nehemiah says, "And I consulted with myself", Nehemiah 5: 7. He was a very good person to take counsel with — the man that has the anointing is the man to take counsel with. Who told Moses to pitch the tabernacle without the camp after the breaking of the law? Did God? If God had told Moses to do it, it would not have been quite the same; it was intuitive, as was Joshua's putting the stones in the bed of Jordan (Joshua 4: 9); he was not told to do it; he was told to take them out before (Joshua 4: 3). Some people always want chapter and verse for everything; that is all very good, but we ought to cultivate these spiritual instincts. Who told Mary to bring the box of ointment? It was Mary's heart that told her. You are brought to it in your own exercises. We are apt to think it is the old white-haired brothers and experienced sisters who have these exercises, but the apostle John says to the 'little children', "Ye have the unction from the holy one, and ye know all things", 1 John 2: 20. What a wonderful thing that is! I have often wondered at it — these men were led by the Holy One, they wanted to present the offering to Jehovah in its set time; they really touched the borders of the land, for the unity of Israel is set forth in the passover. It is kept in the land "at the place that Jehovah thy God will choose", Deuteronomy 16: 5, 6.

JHB That is a new feature.

CAC Yes. That is an added feature. In the wilderness you get the desire of Jehovah to dwell with Israel His people and that there should be appreciation of His dwelling among them is in accordance with the passover, so that when you come into the land He takes it quite away from "thy gates". The book of Deuteronomy has two positions — "thy gates" and the place where Jehovah sets His name. The first refers to household responsibility — not individual; and in the land the people are not viewed as individuals, either as in the households, or in "the place". Certain principles have to be carried out in the households, but when you come to the place where Jehovah has set His name, then you have the unity of all Israel. In Luke 22 it is His household; you have the full character of everything in the upper room: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer". They are in the blessing of the purpose of God and realise their unity; that is the place where every divine thought is known, where He sets His name.

JHB What corresponds to going up to the place today?

CAC What answers to it is a spiritual movement, the unity of the people as identified with His purpose. It is the Ephesian position, Ephesians 1: 2; Ephesians 2: 5 - 7. You see the blessedness of the purpose of God; you see all the saints unified. Who is bound up in it? All the saints. I must love them all; I must pray for them all; I must lay myself out for them all in as far as I am able. The apostle Paul before Agrippa says, "Our whole twelve tribes serving incessantly day and night"; it did not look like it — ten of them were lost and scattered over the earth; but he would not allow before a gentile monarch that anything would be incomplete; that is faith; it is a wonderful thing. The blessing reaches up to the topmost point, all based on the passover. People look on the passover as something for young converts but you will find if you really take in the thought of the passover that you will not have much trouble about anything else. In 2 Chronicles 30: 15 - 17 we find that this celebration carried, in one sense, a very painful feature: the people were not purified, and indeed they were not ready at the "right time"; they had to keep it at the abnormal time, but there was a feeling of shame. That is a little how we have to take it up now. They had got away from Israel's purity which was the purity of the sanctuary; but even then there is an additional element, the *burnt* offerings. Both here and in the time of Josiah the burnt offering has a great place; that is, the precious fragrance of Christ in the burnt offering character. This is a day of recovery; the people are recovered in their affections before spiritual conditions come in; they were *willing* to keep the passover but there were not the spiritual conditions.

In 2 Chronicles 35: 12, in Josiah's time, what you get is that they set apart the burnt offerings; then you get the Levites and the singers (verse 15), and all is done at the proper time. It says (verse 18) there was no such passover since the days of Samuel; there were suitable conditions. It is God reviving things.

Then you get in Ezra's time (Ezra 6) what is so blessed to see — such a wonderful character of purity; when you have conditions like that you have conditions that are morally suitable for the Lord to come in and eat the passover with His people: it is the upper room. The Lord says in John 15, "Ye are already clean by reason of the word which I have spoken to you", and the Lord sits down with that clean company. Do we really covet the Lord's company in our passover exercises? It says they were all clean. Where there are clean conditions the Lord can eat the passover with His disciples and can introduce a new element, so that there you get an essential part which was not in the Old Testament; you do not have the full divine idea till you have the cup. In Ezra you get joy — you get singers. In Chronicles you get the

“passover offerings”; you have the whole truth of fellowship and the holy joy of the drink offering, and the anointing oil; all are bound up with the passover. Now the Lord brings in the new element — the cup, the thought of drinking into all the blessedness that marks the kingdom of God. What kind of things will there be when God has His own way? Everything is full of blessing just because it is full of God. The actual bringing in is going to wait. The Lord said He would not drink it again until He drank it in a new manner “with you”. In Mark’s gospel it is “in the kingdom of my Father”. Can you surpass that in the way of earthly blessing? — you cannot. It is all waiting for its fulfilment. Israel’s Messiah has consecrated the cup as part of the passover; and that is all going to stand on that imperishable basis. It has gradually spread out until it is seen in relation to God, and it opens out till you get this wonderful portion for man; it is what man is to drink into. The Lord says that is going to wait; but He gives it to us in spirit, —

‘Thou dost make us taste the blessing,
Soon to fill a world of bliss’ (394:5);

that is set forth in Melchisedec — bread and wine. The Lord will bring forth all that the passover is going to be. The passover cup is full of eternal life, and God is going to put it into the hands of men on earth, and in the meantime the Lord is going to bring in another cup “after supper”. I have often wondered why it did not say “the bread” after supper. There is something special in the time when the public blessing is not known — the new covenant; the assembly knows it in a better way than Israel. The assembly has the best of everything and enjoys it in the same way as Christ enjoys it. He knew the love of the blessed God in a sorrowing and suffering heart. Israel never knew that, the church is privileged to know the love of God like that. In the presence of all the grief and pain and trials, the assembly knows, and the saint who is of the assembly knows, what it is to retire into what is spoken of by the “cup after supper”; that is a different character of things.

JHB When should we know something of the passover as in Luke 22; is it when we are together?

CAC I think so; it is collective in every sense, in the household character in Egypt, and when enjoyed in the land it is emphasised they were all to go up, from Dan to Beersheba. It is enjoyed in a peculiar way when we are together — you have it all the week.

1 CORINTHIANS 10 (FIRST READING)

1 Corinthians 10:1-22

CAC We must all be struck with what great prominence is given to Christ in this scripture. Moses is clearly a type of Christ, and the spiritual food, the manna, which they ate is also a precious type of Christ. Of the rock of which they drank it is expressly said, "The rock was the Christ".

Ques How is it that they fall in the wilderness after that?

CAC That is just the matter we have to take account of. Though the children of Israel had part in such a wonderful economy the most of them had failed to get the gain of it. We are told that what happened to them is typical of ourselves and for our admonition, so that we may not be strewed in the desert but that we may go right through into the land.

Ques Is it a question of getting to heaven?

CAC No. I think it means getting into that which divine love has in view for us at the present time, of which we may possibly come short. We may fail to give God place because we fail to appreciate what He has brought us into. So it was with Israel; they failed to appreciate Moses, the manna, the Rock, the faithfulness of God and the promise of the land. That is why they came short. We have been brought into a wonderful economy of wealth. I suppose that we have all been baptised to Christ, put into relation to Him as Lord and Head, and have acquired the knowledge of the gift of the Spirit. Well, do we appreciate these things? The only way to escape falling in the wilderness is to appreciate Christ and the Spirit. The way of escape is Christ and the appreciation of Christ. That will keep us safe and nothing else will. Nothing but the appreciation of the grace that has come to us in Christ and the Spirit will keep us. Indeed if we have not that we may eventually fall.

The first part of the chapter links on with the first chapter of the epistle, where we find that Christ is the wisdom and power of God to those whom He calls. If we fall under the power of these things under which Israel fell, God has only one way of recovery — by reviving in our souls the appreciation of Christ and all that has come to us in Him.

Ques Does it involve the eating and drinking? In John 6 there is appreciation on the one hand and appropriation on the other.

CAC The point here is that you may eat and drink and yet be strewed in the desert; thus it is a solemn warning.

Now, christianity began with these precious things. People were baptised to Christ and to His death and ate and drank; they broke bread. I think the apostle has in view the whole christian period. It is by the allowance of the five things enumerated in this chapter that the christian profession has slipped away. God in His faithfulness provides a way out, and Christ is the way out. The Israelites lusted after the food of Egypt. Well, we are in danger of that. If people go back to the world they cannot retain their appreciation of Christ. But in God's faithfulness He provides the way out. If we drop down in our souls we are likely to return to former interests in the world.

So nothing really stands but the faithfulness of God; we gradually acquire a sense that anything that is stable is of God. He has provided an issue, that is, renewed appreciation of Christ which He in sovereignty brings to pass in the affections of His people. The Israelites did not appreciate the wonderful things into which God had brought them. God has recovered things in the whole christian profession. I think the way out is brought about by the ministry of Christ which continually goes on for the deliverance of souls from these various snares. If we drop back to the flesh nothing will recover us but the faithfulness of God bringing Christ before our souls.

The sovereignty of God operated through Paul to the Galatians with a renewed ministry of Christ, bringing sonship before them. Most of us have dropped back in our history at some time. These things happened to them as types; the real working out of the thing is now. What happened to them happened typically, but it has happened to us! This is written to preserve us, and we are preserved by the appreciation of Christ. If we are away in the smallest degree we must cry to God to bring us back to it.

Ques Is this idolatry something more than before?

CAC Paul had very much before him the thought of idolatry of which the assembly at Corinth was in danger.

Ques Do we see everything taken account of as in nature?

CAC God takes account of what is in man's nature, and it is very encouraging that He provides what will keep us free from every tendency of man's nature. These are all things to which man's nature is very prone. God foresaw that all these things would arise in the assembly. All these things that they did we are very prone to do. The point here is that we should not allow ourselves to be moved away from the appreciation of Christ. Murmuring was when they spoke evil of the land; it was questioning divine faithfulness. It speaks, too, of tempting the Christ. They had thirty-eight years' experience of the grace of Christ, and yet they complained that they had been brought to the land to

perish. Who had been ordering for them? When things do not go as we wish we are very apt to tempt Christ, especially when the government of God may involve suffering and trials that may press very heavily on us. There is a temptation to forget that Christ has ordered every step of the path in the wilderness. Whatever we learn of the wretched tendency of our own hearts leads us to have more confidence in God. It is most important to see that we only stand through the faithfulness of God; if we stand otherwise we had better be afraid. God had given them the very best that love could give. It was peculiarly grievous to Him that they despised the pleasant land; such perished in the wilderness; it brought down that direct judgment of God. In our own case we learn that that is the character of our flesh. When we do not learn by divine teaching what our flesh is, we have to learn it under very humbling experiences. God has to teach us that according to the flesh we have derived from the serpent, and then we have to learn that the serpent has been lifted up. The very flesh to which I have yielded has been condemned in God's Son. The Corinthians showed contempt for what was most holy; therefore many were weak and sickly among them and many slept.

Ques Why does he say, "I speak as to intelligent persons"?

CAC I suppose they could be regarded in that light as having the Spirit. He puts it upon them to judge what he was saying. Compared with that he brings in the thought of the cup and the bread; they were not thinking what they were doing and he challenges them. He had before him the whole scope of divine blessing that has come through the death of Christ; it is a general thought. The cup of blessing is rather wider than the cup of the new covenant; he has in mind the whole wealth of the economy of grace which has come to us in the value of the blood of Christ. People take up these things with very little appreciation of what is there. The saints know it is their common portion. They bless the cup and they respond to it; they bless God for the great blessing that has come to them in Christ. Such will escape the dangers of the earlier part of the chapter.

We do not feel strictly limited to the new covenant when we take the cup. We are left at liberty to enlarge on it; we take the cup of blessing. Who can limit that? It is not easy to bring in limitations there because it says, "They shall all know me", Jeremiah 31: 34. What you get under the new covenant is the whole settlement of sin, and the saints have affections of a new kind in which they can bless Christ and the blessed God and can appreciate all the good and blessing that has come through the death of Christ. It has been said that there is less liberty in reference to the cup than there is in connection with the loaf,

but there ought to be more liberty. Christ has mediated the cup of the new covenant to us, the blessing that has come to us from the heart of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 10 (SECOND READING)

1 Corinthians 10:14-33

Ques Perhaps you would tell us why the cup is brought forward before the loaf?

CAC It is evident that the apostle used the exercises which were current as an opportunity of bringing out the truth of christian fellowship. He has in mind that the saints should learn to look at things from the standpoint of their associations. There were some that claimed liberty to eat what was offered to idols, even in idol's houses, on the ground that the idol was nothing; but that was overlooking the moral associations. He would have them to think of the moral associations, and that is very important for us. And in thinking of the fellowship, morally the cup comes before the loaf.

Ques We get the thought of communion or fellowship in connection with both, do we not?

CAC Yes, but we must know the fellowship of His blood first. We should hardly be prepared to think of the fellowship of the body of the Christ if we did not know what it was to understand the fellowship of His blood. The ground must be known first; that is, God must be known in the way of blessing first. The pouring out of the blood of Christ has changed everything; it has brought in a dispensation of blessing, so that there is no longer anything of curse, or distance from God, or unsuitability to Him. God is known in all the blessed value of the blood of the Christ and christian fellowship is a common equal sharing in that. It seems to me that the cup and the loaf give us two entirely different sides of the whole matter of our relations with God and with one another.

It was made known to people in Old Testament times that the dispensation inaugurated at Sinai was to be superseded by another order of things altogether — a new covenant — by which God would be known as a Source of blessing. His people would be taught to know Him, not as a God of demand but of supply. The cup of blessing is connected with the whole economy of blessing; it has come in on the ground of the blood of Christ.

Ques What is involved in the whole economy of blessing? Would it include the millennial day?

CAC Yes; I think it has to do with what is known on earth by the people of God. It does not quite comprise the heavenly side but takes in the whole economy of grace as enjoyed by the people of God down here, and it has come to us in all the value of the blood of the Christ. It is the blessing side of

the fellowship. If we do not know that we shall not go any further. It could not be known before the blood was poured out. When the Lord's supper was instituted at the end of the gospels there was no such thing as the saints blessing the cup; they could not do that. The Lord gave thanks for the cup; He was the only One that could. Not one of those there had any idea what it meant; He was the only One. So it is a wonderful thing that now intelligent persons here on earth can bless the cup; they can do what the disciples then could not do. It is enjoyed in common; there is no variation whatever in the blessing that has come out of the shedding of the blood of Christ. It is the same for Paul as for any poor sinner. It is supposed to characterise the fellowship, to which you are to be true. It is a moral impossibility to drink the cup of demons. Today we have to do with a lot of things in the world which are idolatrous in character, but we do not want to be diverted by any of these, however nice they may seem.

The new covenant was a familiar thing to the Jew, but future. The Lord sets it in the assembly as a present thing. That is, this entirely new dispensation is to be enjoyed by people on earth. It is the sphere of privilege that we enjoy in the wilderness down here; it does not touch the resurrection of Christ.

Ques You would not exclude the enjoyment of spiritual things?

CAC But I do distinguish between the enjoyment of spiritual things and the fellowship, which is enjoyed down here. The gift of the Spirit is essential, for how could we bless otherwise? But what you bless is not connected with the Lord's resurrection and ascension, but relates entirely to His death. The more simply we keep to that, the nearer we shall get to God. This fellowship subsists in what speaks of death. It is vitally important to see that because then we move on. We must begin with the cup; it is the thing looked at morally. An entirely new order of things has come to pass here on the earth, enjoyed by people who have a common equal sharing, in this very place, of blessing made known through the pouring out of the blood of Christ.

Anything idolatrous will bring a shadow between me and the blessed God and the knowledge of Him that has come to me through the death of Christ. What is not of God as known in blessing in the death of Christ is diverting. The saints, viewed in the wilderness position, know God in the blessing that has come in in the death of Christ and they respond to it. Well, there is no idolatry there! Every moral question is settled in the value of the blood. There is forgiveness, complete purgation; not one thing is left to hinder believers from enjoying the blessing in common; and it is all brought about in the value of the blood of Christ. This lays the moral foundation on which we can move on to the new position of our being risen with Christ and seated with Him in

heavenly places. But if we are not firmly settled on this lower platform we are not likely to touch these higher planes of service.

Ques What would you say of the body here?

CAC It is the body of Christ in death. The body of Christ brings before us quite a different thought from His blood. It brings before us the moral character of what came out in His body, that is, absolute devotion to the will of God that would not stop short of His death.

We have our fellowship in the first place in the appreciation of that as seen objectively in the loaf. We think first of what comes out in His body, absolute devotion to the will of God and to those who were the subjects of that will, the saints. It does not stop there, for in connection with the thought of the bread he brings us into it. He does not leave it as abstract or objective, because we break it and again, further down it says we all partake of it. We bless the cup. It is not that we handle the cup in this chapter, but we do touch the loaf. The loaf enters into the fellowship as an essential part of it but this scripture suggests the thought that we break and partake of it; we have our part in it. He shows clearly that that which came out in Christ is to have an extension in the saints. Suppose that you could contemplate all the perfections that came out in the body of Christ and felt at the same time that you could never participate in them, you would be the most miserable of all men! Does that not follow morally on the cup? If the knowledge of God comes to you and makes you supremely happy, how could you do anything else but do His will? He says of the new covenant, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days ... : I will put my law in their inward parts, and will write it in their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them ... for I will pardon their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more", Jeremiah 31: 33, 34. (This is also quoted in Hebrews 8:10 - 12). They will delight to do His will, and if this is true of Israel how much more would the saints today do His will, not in heaven, but in this very world where Christ's dead body was?

This is all connected with the Lord's table. We all understand that the Lord's table is the loaf, I suppose. He distinguishes between the Lord's cup and the Lord's table, so the one is the cup and the other is the loaf. It seems to me quite clear that if the Lord has a cup, it is that which He administers, what He ministers to His own. His table is His administration too. He administers to His saints deep spiritual joy, and God as known in connection with His blessing. With the loaf He administers to His saints at His table all that came out in His

holy body for the delight and pleasure of God. The table really includes both. The truth of the fellowship should always be deepening in our souls. We may know little of it, but we know enough to set to our seal that it is true.

This is the sphere of the fellowship; it is what we enter into as people living down here. "Ye cannot drink the Lord's cup, and the cup of demons". You cannot possibly have God and the devil at the same time; it is a moral impossibility. And if we allow anything that belongs to the system that gives God no place to enter into us or to govern us, we rob ourselves of the blessing and joy of the fellowship. Worldly links cause us to lose our divine links with our brethren.

Ques What would you say as to the body here?

CAC He is not thinking of the body here as formed by the Spirit as in chapter 12 but as the body formed morally by the fellowship. It is the saints unified in their appreciation of Christ and in taking character from Christ; it is not the truth of the one body as we speak. If we want to see the will of God worked out, where can we see it livingly but in the body of Christ? Anyone who appreciates that must be committed to the will of God. He administers the joy of the cup and the substantial nourishment of the loaf, so that the saints are formed in His character. If I am doing the will of God and someone else is doing his own will, how could I have fellowship with him? It is what we are down here where we did nothing but sin; in that very place we have presented our bodies to prove "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God". One takes up one part of it and another another, and so the will of God is done. There will be no difficulty with the fellowship then. It is all summed up in the verse at the end of this chapter, "Whatever ye do, do all things to God's glory".

In Psalm 16 you see the One who is presented to us in death as the loaf; all those features that marked Him are surely to come out in His own: "Preserve me, O God: for I trust in thee". Do I not want to have part in that, to partake of it in that way? The saints on the earth, the excellent, are His delight. Do I not want to come into that? Do I not want to delight in them? Then how He shrinks from idolatry and delights in God. Now that is the body. We put our hands to that when we take the loaf and we put our hands to that permanently, we might say, not only for about an hour and a half. There is no other way into fellowship but what we have been talking about tonight; there is absolutely no other way.

In the cup we appreciate the rich blessing of God. How could you go to God and ask Him to bless you more than He has blessed you? You could not possibly do so! As to the moral side, the will of God has been done perfectly in

Christ, but then we appropriate it and assimilate it so that it comes out in us.
There is no other way of coming into fellowship.

1 CORINTHIANS 10 AND 11

1 Corinthians 10:23-33; 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

CAC I suppose the thought in the closing part of the chapter is that Christian liberty must not be used in a way that may be damaging to others. Paul had in mind seeking the profit of others.

Ques What is the link between this and the previous part of the chapter? Is it liberty?

CAC This section tends to preserve liberty in the minds of the saints. So they were not to ask questions if meat was for sale publicly, whether it was offered to a heathen god in sacrifice before it came there.

Ques How would this principle apply today?

CAC Well, one might have liberty in one's own conscience that might tend to be damaging to another; if so we surrender our liberty for the good of the one who might be injuriously affected by it.

Divine principles are established and they may come in in a way we might not think of. It is a case here of the beautiful Christian grace of caring for the good of others so that they may be edified or saved. It is not having my own gain in view, but the spiritual gain of others. For instance, if I knew that drink was a temptation to a man I would not have it on the table, though personally I should be free to do so. The apostle brings in the principle of christian liberty, but alongside that the principle of surrendering liberty if it would be good for another.

Rem There seem to be three classes in verse 32: "Give no occasion to stumbling, whether to Jews, or Greeks, or the assembly of God".

CAC There are three distinct bodies of people now, and all are to be carefully considered.

Ques What of the invitation by an unbeliever in verse 27?

CAC Well, what do you make of that?

Ques What about the Lord being invited into a Pharisee's house?

CAC "If ... ye are minded to go", it says. I suppose it makes for christian liberty. You can go if you want to; he does not commend them for going. Of course in the second epistle when they were further advanced he called them to come out and be separate and touch not the unclean thing. And he says distinctly that there is nothing in common between an unbeliever and a believer. Perhaps they were hardly prepared for that before. It is a great

exercise to be invited into an unbeliever's house because if you cannot go there to represent Christ you had better not go. It is a definite exercise.

Rem Why you were invited is a question.

CAC It is. There are no hard and fast rules laid down. None of us would like to be under a rigid rule. It might be that the Lord was in it.

Ques Would the fact of the Lord's going into the Pharisee's house bear on it?

CAC Yes. He seems to have gone where He was invited, but He went on His own terms; He never went anywhere on mere social grounds. If the desire that men should be saved is governing us, we can safely go into an unbeliever's house. Of course it supposes that you give thanks for your food; no christian would think of eating without that, so the christian goes in on his own terms. The model is Christ. That is what it all leads to. "Be my imitators, even as I also am of Christ". Christ is the model. That applies to going in to an unbeliever's house; you cannot go in to be on a level with them.

Ques I suppose all this has in view the preservation from outside conditions on the part of those that form the assembly of God. Is that not the principle?

CAC Verse 31 would adjust every detail, so that we are not to cause offence. The Lord said, "Lest we should offend them", Matthew 17: 27. They had no claim; He was the King's Son and yet He worked a miracle that those Jews might not be offended. J.N.D. said once, 'Persons do not take offence if you approach them with a moderate degree of consideration and kindness'. That is, it is well to leave the sledge-hammer behind when you go to an unbeliever's house.

Ques What would the ordinances be that he refers to in chapter 11?

CAC I think he had communicated to them the truths of christianity and certain instructions how to behave, and they had in measure carried them out, so that he could praise them accordingly. We need instruction and chapter 11 is very important for us, as bringing before us the order that is suitable to God. They evidently had not understood before that Christ is Head of every man. Elsewhere he says, "Know ye not ...", but here he says, "I wish you to know ...", showing that they did not know. And does it not lie at the very root of assembly order? "Christ is the head of every man". That does not include women. The whole point of the early part of chapter 11 is the difference between the man and the woman, and this is to be publicly recognised. It is a matter of public order in the assembly, and, of course, privately too.

Rem The headship of Christ in Romans 5 is rather different; He is Head of the race.

CAC Yes, that takes in the whole human family. God has brought in a new Head for man, and that should be preached in the gospel more than it is.

Rem There are three heads in this chapter, Christ and man and God.

CAC It is sometimes thought that this chapter bears particularly on the woman, but I think it bears very much on the man. He begins, "I wish you to know that the Christ is the head of every man". It is for every man to take note of, particularly men who are in the assembly of God.

Ques. Is it always true?

CAC The difference between the man and the woman is always true, and the relative position between the man and the woman is always true; it has to be recognised especially where praying and prophesying are in question.

Ques How would a woman prophesy?

CAC This scripture clearly supposes that she will. There are prophetesses in Scripture and it is possible to prophesy without being a prophetess. It means speaking for God; sisters ought perhaps to be more exercised as to doing that, speaking definitely for God. It is clearly not in the assembly because the same epistle says that women are to keep silent in the assembly.

A woman must be covered, so a sister would not think of going to see a sick person or anyone to whom she was going to speak of God without having her head covered. It is part of the divine order. And the man has to keep his head uncovered. No man on earth is entitled to move or to speak without reference to Christ. We can see in the Lord what it means; He was a perfect Man who had a Head. He said, "I have set Jehovah continually before me" (Psalm 16: 8); that is, He always lived in reference to God as His Head. No man is right on the earth until he lives in reference to Christ. He is Head of every man by divine appointment, even if men know nothing about it.

It is good to get a very comprehensive view of Christ. What an immense field He covers! He is Head of every man and He is willing to occupy the position in a real and practical way. If Christ is not Head for us as in Romans 5 there is no hope for us. Adam brought in sin and gave no way of escape, but then God has brought in a new Head. Adam is not the head of all men, Christ is; He has met the pressure of sin and death which every man in this world is under, for however jovial he may be he sees no way out of it.

The recognition of Christ as Head is how we get wisdom to move in relation to God, and it would bear especially on the service of the assembly. No man is entitled to take any part in the assembly except in so far as he recognises Christ as his Head. And if this is so it will be a very suitable thing for the women to recognise the headship of the man. It is only as the men recognise the headship of Christ that they will be able to appear in the image and glory of God. The woman is not that; she is the glory of the man. It is a fixed position, not a changeable or optional matter at all. It is a fixed position appointed by God. Christ looked to God for everything; His ear was awakened morning by morning so that He might speak a word to him that was weary.

Ques Would you say that we see it objectively in Christ?

CAC Yes, that is helpful. We see the real character of it in Christ. Every believing man is to look up to Christ as Head, just as Christ did to God. If I do I get the gain of Christ as my Head. I should act nicely and suitably and in a comely way in the assembly or in service. There is no other way. It is an individual matter; it is not a collective thing.

We cannot doubt that there was a very great lack of what the apostle wished at Corinth, or these disorders would never have existed. The public order of the assembly would be beautiful if this came about. Some would be astonished that a meeting for worship could be carried on without a chairman. A meeting for worship can only be carried on on the principle that every man is holding Christ as Head and is directed by that. If not, it has no spiritual value. If it were so, we should not have any jolts. What dignity it puts on the men, that the brothers have a relation to Christ which the sisters have not!

Rem There is "holding fast the head" in Colossians.

CAC That is the spiritual and universal side, but this is the side of assembly order, what we can see and hear, the public side — the wilderness side of the position, as we often say.

1 CORINTHIANS 11 (FIRST READING)

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

CAC It is noticeable that the apostle clothes both the man and the woman with glory before he speaks of the coming together of the saints. The whole chapter down to verse 16 is to develop the glory of the man and the woman.

Ques What is the bearing of that on what follows?

CAC I suppose it supplies a correction for the disorder that had come in at Corinth.

Ques Is it the full height of the divine standard put before the saints?

CAC Yes, as regards conditions here in the created scene. It is the assembly as it is in the created scene which normally comes together for the taking of the Supper; so that all that is suited to God in the creation must be there, each brother and sister bringing glory. There was a lack of it at Corinth. The divine thought is that the customs of the assembly are glorious and each member of the assembly is to contribute glory. Man has the glory of his created position in the assembly without diminution and woman has her own distinctive glory as filling her assigned place according to her created position. Everything has its place, not only according to divine commandments but divine instructions also.

Rem The assembly is the only place where divine order is seen under the eye of God.

CAC What is suitable in the created sphere ought to be intuitive to us. "Judge in yourselves", he says. 'You ought to know that intuitively; you ought not to need any scripture for it'. The man must stand in the knowledge of Christ as Head and the woman must stand in the knowledge that man is her head; then things are in order in the created sphere.

Ques In Ephesians it speaks of the all-various wisdom of God being made known through the assembly; is that what you have in your mind?

CAC Yes, and it says distinctly that it is because of the angels that women are to be covered, not because men are present, but because angels are present.

There are certain things we ought to know intuitively and should not need to be told. Shem and Japheth knew what was comely in connection with their father, Noah; but Ham lacked in intuitive knowledge, and Canaan came under the curse in consequence. Faith, especially, ought to have intuitive knowledge, and does that not provide the conditions for coming together? There was a

sad lack of glory at Corinth; they even came together for the worse! The brothers and sisters should each bring glory with them; if not, they become a shame and a reproach instead of a pleasure to divine Persons.

Ques Would you explain the difference between 'intuitive' and 'instinctive'?

CAC Intuitive means that it is intelligent. An animal may have instinct but human beings in their proper glory have intuition. It belongs to the creature position.

Headship was soon surrendered. If Eve had been holding Adam as head she would never have parleyed with the serpent. Adam lost headship too. The first element of divine recovery is the truth of headship, so that we find it at the beginning of the chapter. Assembling together at Corinth only brought out discord and divisions.

I suppose the greatest truth of Scripture is the headship of God; that has been fully owned by one blessed anointed Man. So we find that at Corinth they had given up the Lord's supper. The apostle had delivered it to them as it had been delivered to him, and they had quite turned away from it. Each was eating his own supper, it says. I suppose it was actually the working of Satan to set aside all that had been ministered to them by the apostle. And that goes on all the time, so now we have to be recalled to what is very fundamental. The Lord's supper in itself is one of the simplest things in Scripture; it has a claim on the affections of all who give the Lord a place of honour in their hearts that nothing else could have.

Ques Would taking the Supper wrongly be virtually a refusal of headship?

CAC It had not its place at Corinth. We cannot say a great deal about the place it has with us, perhaps. It was evidently the Lord's pleasure that His saints should come together. It is not referred to before except in chapter 5. He had not referred to their normal coming together.

The Lord has pleasure in unifying His saints actually in coming together. There is no such thing as an invisible church. They are actually unified in calling the Lord to mind. We come together to have it as a reality. We desire to escape from what is individual and merge in what is the common portion of all. There is a material act in which we are unified. That act, if rightly carried on, unifies us spiritually, because if there are fifty hearts calling the Lord to mind they must be one.

Ques Would the bringing of this to pass be effected by the Lord or the Head?

CAC In the first place by the Lord. It is the Lord's supper; "the Lord" is so many times mentioned in these verses. It was the Lord who, on the very verge

of that solemn hour, "your hour and the power of darkness", found comfort in that myriads of saints would come together for the purpose of calling Him to mind. It is very touching. It is made available to any one who confesses Jesus as Lord, even though one may be very small and feeble, and, like the Corinthians, tinged with carnality. If it is rightly availed of we shall become qualified for divine service. The bread qualifies us for service to the Lord and the cup for service to God; and both services will be secured if we rightly eat the Supper.

Ques How would you distinguish the services?

CAC There are hymns addressed to the Lord — there is a place for them; and to the Father — there must be a place for them; also to God — there is a place for them. The Supper rightly eaten would qualify us for every part of the divine service. Nothing so gratifies the affections of the saints as acknowledging the lordship of Christ. It is the body and blood of the Lord. We are affected even by looking at the bread and the cup. The Lord — it is the supreme One, the Lord in supremacy. And it is wonderful that His supremacy in love has come out in His giving up His body in manhood and His blood being poured out. It is the Lord's body and the Lord's blood. There is what is due to Him in taking on His title of Lord. He is asserting in it His title as to what is due to Him, that all His saints take His supper rightly, for He is asserting the claim of His love. Tens of thousands of saints do not think it is at all an obligatory thing, but indeed it is! The Lord has not asserted many claims in detail on His saints, very few in fact, but He has asserted a claim to a material act for a few moments once a week. Well, if so, woe betide the lover of His who disregards it! I think that is why the title of Lord is emphasised — it is a claim of His love. It is such a delightful claim; we might say indeed that His commandment is not grievous. It is an invitation to come into the greatest blessedness, if even only for one minute, in the greatest sphere. It is like going to heaven!

Ques May we call the Lord to mind when alone?

CAC I hope very many of us have had many thoughts of the Lord today. But then this calling to mind is a collective calling to mind, so if we say, 'Christ died for thee' that is the service individualised. A saint is to take it up in company with his brethren. It cannot be done as an individual; otherwise it is very like what he says here, "each one in eating takes his own supper". You eat bread and drink the cup; it is a material act with tremendous spiritual import behind it! So there is no such thing as an individual eating the Supper alone; you must eat it along with others who eat it.

Rem The 'breaking of bread' is what you might call a technical term to describe the occasion.

CAC It is wonderful to think that the Lord was pleased to do this! He "took bread, and having given thanks broke it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me". This simple material act has been enjoined on us as a material act. It speaks of His own body as laid in death. You must remember it was the Creator, the Almighty God, "from eternity to eternity". He has been pleased to come into manhood and take on all that was to be done that was pleasing to God. In His body He took it all on. Then in His devotion to God and to His saints He laid it down in death. Every christian is under obligation to say, 'There is none like Him'. The youngest and feeblest believer can delight in what came out in that body — His body.

Ques Would you say what the difference is between Luke where the Lord says, "This is my body which is given for you", and Corinthians where it is simply, "which is for you"?

CAC I think that the difference is that in the gospel it is more historical; it is the fact that His body is given; while in the epistle, where the Lord speaks as gloried, He left out the fact of giving His body, but all that came out in His body lying in death is for the saints.

Ques Would it be possible to break bread without eating the Supper?

CAC That supposes a very careless state of heart. We do not like to think of anybody doing it otherwise than as answering to the claim of the Lord's love, do we?

It is very touching to think that it should be given, as it were a second time, to a company who had departed from it and violated its character. It is most touching, because Paul had given it to them all when he was amongst them, and now again he gives it as if given from a glorified Lord. If we understand that His holy body has been devoted in death for the assembly, it necessitates that the assembly should be for Him. No other company of saints will ever eat the Lord's supper as far as we know. It puts the saints into the position of the spouse, the wife, which leads to the part of the service where wifely affections for the Lord are expressed. If we understand that all that came out in that holy body was devoted in love for the assembly in death, it leads to a response in love so sweet and wondrous. So in the Song of Songs the spouse expresses her appreciation of Him, and that naturally follows out of the Supper. Why should anyone wish to do it if he does not regard the Lord with affection? Then there is also the cup which is linked with the loaf. That brings in another order of things.

Ques Do the words, "in like manner" refer to the giving of thanks?

CAC I think so.

Ques Why are thanks given for the bread first and then separately for the cup? They are not given for both together.

CAC I think they are separated in divine wisdom; both, of course, refer directly to the Lord's death, which is most important to understand. The loaf would clearly secure on the part of the saints that part of the service addressed to the Lord Himself. As to the cup, we are looking at the Lord's death in a new setting which lays the basis for the service Godward; it is the basis for it. It is evident that there was such a thing spoken of as a new covenant which would be consummated. The Lord came in to set up that new covenant in a way that the Old Testament had not spoken of, and that His own had not thought of. That is, He came to set it up in the power of His own blood. It was, I suppose, what was effected on God's part, so He effects, as God's representative, all that was bound up in the new covenant, and He effects it in the power of His own blood. It is a question now of God moving to bring about a state of things pleasing to Himself. God is moving in new covenant character to lay a righteous basis for all His thoughts of blessing for man, His sinful creature.

Ques What would you say as to the terms of the new covenant?

CAC There is something here greater than the terms of the new covenant. You cannot have 'terms' with His blood; you must leave them out. God wants man for Himself — a people — that is the great thought, and He says, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and will write it in their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people ... for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them ... and their sin will I remember no more", Jeremiah 31: 33, 34. God does all that; He effects new birth in the power of the blood of Christ; He could not effect new birth without that.

Rem It says in Hebrews 9: 12 that He "by his own blood, has entered in".

CAC It is very wonderful, but the new covenant hardly goes as far as entering in. It brings you to know God so that you are responsive, and to know that every question of sin and lawlessness is disposed of. There is the total clearance of every question of moral responsibility that could be raised with us, and that is as creatures down here. Jesus was great enough to bring God in so that He should be known; but apart from His death, His blood shedding, we could not have known Him.

We see God moving in the new covenant. The offerings gave the knowledge of sin. The sacrifices were a "calling to mind" (the only other place where the same word is used is Hebrews 10: 3) of sins; the people were reminded that they were there. But in the new covenant God has disposed of their sins and lawlessnesses and given the people a knowledge of Himself as according to His own nature. The Lord has the glory of all that; it has been secured in His death. We remember the living One who is in the presence of God, who once lay in death, the One who is now invested with the glory of all that He has accomplished in His death. We call Him to mind as He is. If you think of an absent person you think of them as they are now, not as they were many years ago. Now He is in the glory of God invested in the glory of all He effected when He lay in death.

Rem F.E.R. said that it is not a remembrance, but an active calling to mind.

CAC If we call Him to mind as He is now we should be very glad if He came in now; what He wants is a company so unified that He can come into their midst.

1 CORINTHIANS 11 (SECOND READING)

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

It is important to notice that the Supper is connected with our coming together in assembly. In verses 17 and 18 Paul says that “ye come together, not for the better, but for the worse. For first, when ye come together in assembly, I hear there exist divisions among you”, and in verse 20, “When ye come therefore together into one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For each one in eating takes his own supper before others”. It clearly shows that the Supper would be in connection with the coming together, but it suggests that the coming together of saints might not be suitable to the Supper. The saints, as a matter of fact, did come together at Corinth but they came together most unsuitably and divisions existed which were manifested even when they came together. The Supper is introduced to correct all that, so that the saints might come together in divine unity. The object, the primary object, of the Supper, is that the saints might be together in divine and spiritual unity, and only thus can they have the true character of the assembly of God.

Paul addresses them as the assembly of God in Corinth at the outset, but he also speaks of some as despising the assembly of God; in the very way they were coming together they were despising the assembly of God. There were divisions, and then each one was eating his own supper; things were being taken up entirely, and even publicly, in an individual way. Surely these things in their moral application are not to be limited to Corinth. Many of those who think they are eating the Lord’s supper are really eating their own supper, that is, they take what they call the ‘Sacrament’ or the ‘Holy Communion’, but they take it entirely on an individual basis, though it may be with a grateful and affectionate sense that the Lord has died for them — they delight to think of that; but it is more what the Lord has done for them that is before them, and if what the Lord has done for me is the prominent thought in my mind, I am not eating the Lord’s supper, I am eating my own supper. The Lord’s supper is divinely intended to bring the saints together. We cannot eat the Lord’s supper alone because it is a collective matter; we have fellowship. If we all partake of one loaf and one cup, it is a collective matter. The Lord’s supper stands connected with Paul’s ministry. Paul says emphatically, I received from the Lord”. The twelve, one might say, received it of the Lord in the days of His flesh, but Paul was the only one who received it from the Lord as risen and glorified. He says, I received from the Lord”; the Lord gave it to Paul in connection with his ministry in regard to the assembly. It is the centre, the true rallying point of the assembly of God; and it raises a question with every one of us as to whether we are, in our souls, on the ground of the assembly of

God which gives the Lord's supper the central place, or whether we are on sectarian ground. Some of those at Corinth were on sectarian ground; although they were actually all coming together, yet there were sects amongst them. Some of them were sectarian; there were divisions among them; there was not unity even when they came together. There was a lack of spiritual unity, and the apostle is seeking to adjust it, or rather the Lord is seeking to adjust it, by giving the Supper its proper place.

The Lord's supper would revive the affections of the saints and so centralise them on certain divine objects that there would not be a jarring note in the assembly. It is just as effective today as ever it was. The power of what is presented here is as great as it was when Paul penned it. The conditions of disorder at the present time are not so manifest as they were then, and if it sufficed to adjust things then, it would suffice today. You can meet the Lord individually in your own room, but to meet the Lord in the company of the saints, to meet Him in the assembly of God, we must see the Lord's way to form and mould our affections. The Supper is the Lord's way, the way of divine love, to mould and form our affections so that we might be together without a jarring note, without any disorder, that we might be together as the assembly of God. If there had been any better means of securing what the Lord desires than the Supper, He would have used them. The fact that the Lord has taken this simple means (nothing could be more simple outwardly, nothing more profound inwardly and spiritually) in the wisdom of His love shows that there is no better way. There is no better way of moulding the spiritual affections of saints and putting them together in spiritual unity than the Lord's supper.

"This is my body, which is for you". You could not limit that "you". It is as wide as the love of Christ. It embraces every saint on the face of the earth, or more practically put, it embraces every saint in the town where we live.

The Supper is the peculiar portion of the assembly; no other family will eat the Lord's supper. The saints who succeed us, the remnant of Israel, may take up some memorial of Passover character, but I do not think they will take up the Lord's supper because the Lord's supper is connected with the body. It is connected with that peculiar and distinctive truth which marks off the assembly from all other families of saints which went before and which will come after. What marks off the church period and the church saints is "one body", and the Supper is connected with one body. I do not think any saint ever did or ever will eat the Lord's supper but those who are of the one body. There is nothing that we have to cherish with more jealous and holy affection than the Lord's supper. The devil has done his utmost to rob the people of God of the Supper; he has made it sacramental; he has made it into a religious

ceremony or a means of grace; he has taken away its true character. It is helpful to see that the matter is presented in three different aspects in this chapter; it is spoken of as a remembrance, as an announcement, and with regard to the responsibility that attaches to eating and drinking. These three things are separate but we have to remember that what is for the Lord is the remembrance. That is for the Lord and, therefore, the remembrance has the first place. He says, "This do in remembrance of me". The remembrance is for the Lord; the announcement is for the world.

In Luke there is the thought of "remembrance" but there is no "remembrance" in Mark or in Matthew. It is important to see that. In Mark it is, "Take", and in Matthew He says, "Take, eat". Now those are very important things, but they are not the remembrance. We reach Luke by way of Mark and Matthew. "Take" is the appropriating to ourselves of all the import which the Lord put upon the loaf. Matthew and Mark tell us that He blessed the bread; it looks at the Lord on the divine side, and the Lord blesses the bread; He clothed it with a spiritual import which no other loaf in this world ever had. Now in Mark He says, "Take". Each saint has to know what it is to "take" the loaf, to lay hold of it in our affections in all the import that the Lord has clothed it with. Then in Matthew He goes further; He not only says, "Take" but "eat". Our very constitution is to be formed by the import of this loaf. He says, 'You are to eat it'. What a wonderful character it would give us if we really took and ate spiritually what the Lord would express to us in the loaf, that is, His own body! If we have taken it and eaten it we shall become the kind of people who could come together according to Luke. If we have learned individually to take it up on the line of Mark and Matthew it would prepare us to take it up as a remembrance. In Luke it is a remembrance. There is a remembrance of the Lord in unity, a remembrance of church character, something quite different from anything that we can take up individually. We can think of the Lord in our own chamber, we can retire with the Bible, or bow our knees in prayer, or occupy ourselves in meditation; we can talk to Him adoringly, we can remember Him individually. But then, what the Lord wants is assembly remembrance; He wants this peculiar character of remembrance which only the assembly can give Him. The Lord views the assembly as great enough to answer to His own love for it. He loves the assembly; He gave Himself for it. He has given His body to be the portion of the assembly, to be the nourishment of the assembly's affections.

I think that at Corinth they had ceased to give the Lord His place as Head, and it is very remarkable that when we come to the Supper as in Luke's gospel and as in Corinthians, the Lord seems to present Himself to us as Head. I think He is seen as Lord in Matthew and Mark (it is in connection with the loaf I am

speaking now particularly) for He blesses the bread; but in Luke He gives thanks for it, and in Corinthians He gives thanks. Now when the Lord gives thanks He is viewed as on our side; He has taken a place on man's side if He gives thanks. So that it is really the Lord as Head who presents the Supper to us; so that we can understand why the truth of headship comes in at the beginning of this chapter, because if the Lord gives thanks for the bread and for the cup He has come to our side. It is important to distinguish between the Lord blessing and giving thanks. As blessing He is on God's side — He is Lord. He is authoritatively, as Lord; clothing the bread with a new and spiritual import. He says, 'It is My body'. But when He gives thanks He is on our side, so that we take up the Lord's supper in the light of His headship.

It is a great exercise with me to get at what was in the Lord's mind when He instituted the Supper. If we could see what was in the Lord's mind and in His heart when He instituted the Supper, it would have a wonderful regulative and formative effect when we come together. We are to come together for the remembrance. Let us think of this: the remembrance is for the Lord. It is not for us, it is for the Lord. He says, "This do in remembrance of me". The remembrance is connected both with breaking the bread and with drinking the cup. The brother who breaks the bread is rendering a precious service amongst the brethren and, as doing it in the serving spirit of Christ, he would suggest Christ in the very way that he does it. The Lord was there at that supper table. He says, "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves", Luke 22: 27. Now if the brother who breaks the bread does not do it in serving love he would not convey any impression of what the Supper really means.

But the whole service is of assembly character. All of us break bread; the saints come together to break bread, so that the thing is looked at as an act of the assembly — we do it. But then, it recalls the Lord. It is a great exercise really to know what was in the Lord's mind when He instituted the Supper and to bring the impression of that into the meeting so that there might be a breaking of bread in which the Lord shall be recognised. "He was made known to them in the breaking of bread", Luke 24: 35. Whilst that was not exactly the Supper it was a figure of His death, and one would desire that when the Supper is eaten every soul present might recognise the Lord. Sometimes we bring in many thoughts which are not exactly what the Lord would suggest to us, and we do not allow Him to mould our affections in His own way. The Lord has His own way of moulding assembly affections and that way is by the Supper, and the more simple we are in taking up what the Lord suggests to us in it the nearer we shall get to His heart and the more truly shall we remember Him. It is only as we get into the thoughts of His love that we have the Person before us. He says, 'Remember Me'. He wants to fill our affections

with Himself, known in this blessed way. There is nothing in heaven or earth like the Supper. It is a concentrated appeal of divine love to us and it enshrines every moving influence that the Lord could present to us in order to mould our affections. Think of the greatness of His saying, "This is my body"! How immense it is if we think of who He is! He is the Son, a Person of the Godhead; He is a Man, but Jehovah's Fellow! He would have us to think of the wonderfulness of the Person who has come in flesh — a divine Person! It is no reaching out to something that He had no title to. It was His by right; and it is such a Person as that who came in a human body prepared for Him. He came down from heaven to bring the good pleasure of God, all that was of delight to heaven, into this world in His own Person. It is all wrapped up in, "This is my body". That word enshrines the whole truth of the incarnation. The delights of God are not confined to heaven; they have come forth into this world in that body — the full delight of God in a Man! And all the thoughts of God in regard to the blessing of man were secured in Him.

We need to withdraw ourselves into seclusion of heart to ponder the greatness of this. And when we come together the Lord would withdraw the assembly into the seclusion of the Supper that we may ponder it afresh together. The Lord would say, as it were, 'It is in this way I would mould your remembrance of Me. What I delight in, My peculiar joy, is that you should remember Me in assembly character, and I take this way to mould you into the kind of remembrance that will suit My heart'. One might say, 'Jesus is my Saviour; I delight to think of Him as my Saviour'. Well, the Lord appreciates that; but it is not the kind of remembrance which would satisfy Him from the assembly. It is most wonderful to think that such a Person, having come in such a body into this world, would go into death, would give His body in death, in order that the assembly might be secured for all that is the pleasure and delight of divine love.

1 CORINTHIANS 11 (THIRD READING)

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

We might have read from Luke's gospel which corresponds almost exactly with what we get here, but I thought it might be well to look at it as our own apostle received it and delivered it to us. We have, in the corresponding scriptures in Mark and Matthew, what the Lord did, how He blessed the bread and gave thanks for the cup. The Lord was pleased to put a very special significance on that bread and that cup, a moral and spiritual import. That must come first. We must apprehend the import of what He said, and appropriate what He puts within our reach in His body and His blood. We must understand that first.

Now we have before us what we do: "This do". He calls upon His own to do something. Twice over He says, "This do". One feels how touching it is that He should have given us something to do, not at all in the way of works, but He has given us a certain material act to do for the calling of Him to mind. It is suggested by love and it appeals to love. He says, "This do". I have no doubt it is intended to bring together and keep together the company of those who love Him. It is nothing to those who do not love Him. If it is not an affectionate remembrance it is nothing. The whole act constitutes remembrance. Giving thanks, breaking the bread, eating and drinking is all one act: "This do". It indicates the deep personal affection of the Lord. His heart yearned and still yearns to have a very definite place with us. The act — doing the act — calls Him to mind. The same word is used in Hebrews 10: 3 where the Spirit of God tells us of the yearly "calling to mind of sins". The act of bringing the sacrifices called to mind the sins of the whole year that was past. This act which we do in eating the Lord's supper calls the Lord to mind. The act brings that Person to mind. The Lord has been most gracious in His love in giving us a material and tangible act. There is no such thing as eating the Lord's supper spiritually. The act and the material symbols, though having a spiritual import, call Him to mind. It is the way of infinite, divine wisdom. It is very simple but it secures the presence of the assembly as constituted by this material act. The Lord is calling all His own to the remembrance of Himself. There is special grace from the Lord to be counted on. He will furnish the grace to His lovers to do it, to do it in the way the Lord intended it to be done in order to have the results He intended. When we come together the remembrance is the first thing before us. It is the first thing in the mind of the Lord. He wants to be called to mind. We lose the sweetness of that sometimes by having other things before us, such as the presence of the Lord amongst us, the enjoyment of assembly privileges or the wonderful place of the

assembly with Christ before His God and Father, but that is not remembrance. I do not think we shall reach or enjoy the Lord's presence or His leading in His assembly if we do not start with the remembrance. The effect of having the emblems before us is that it gives concentration to every mind. Perfect unity of mind in assembly is brought about by the concentration of every mind on what we have come to do: "This do". Every mind is concentrated on the Lord Jesus. We are going to do something, a certain act that will call the Lord to mind. The emblems concentrate our thoughts on Christ at one particular moment — not Christ after the flesh. We do not forget the beauty of that:

'O who shall sing that path of worth,
That led up to the throne?' (57:2)

But the emblems do not call us to think of Him after the flesh but in death. Christ in death! Beloved brethren, the Lord loves to be called to mind in that supreme moment when His love and the love of God found full expression as He gave Himself for the assembly. It was never to be repeated; it was a moment and an act adequate to give expression to all in the heart of Christ and of God. What an appeal to our hearts! Everything has come from there, and all will come from there, from that point. Our minds are concentrated on that point where everything blessed was concentrated, all in the heart of Christ and God, His body given and His blood poured out having the new covenant in it. We come to the source of all our blessing. Through all eternity we shall have nothing greater to look back to than the death of Christ. It is the greatest thing in the moral universe. The memorials secure the calling to mind of Christ, for those who take it up.

We get, as to the night in which He was delivered up, the contrast in Luke between what was occupying the Lord when instituting the Supper and what was passing amongst the disciples — "Moreover, behold, the hand of him that delivers me up is with me on the table" (Luke 22: 21) — the wretchedness of the disciples' ambitions, desires, and Peter's boasting! (verses 24 - 34). We need to have that in mind. How do we come together? Is it with a sense in our hearts that the Lord is not here, that it is the place and time of His delivering up? He is not here and that makes the appeal so sweet and tender to our hearts to call Him to mind until He come. It is Himself, for the calling of Him to mind (see note to verse 24). It is not to remember how we are blessed! We are blessed and enriched and filled up in Christ, but that is not the remembrance. All is concentrated in Him as having gone into death. If you have the attraction of the emblems on the one hand, you have in all that is outside the elements to drive us together. We have to feel as we move about that the Lord is not here and is not wanted here, but we love Him. He can do

anything with a company that call Him to mind. We prove what the Lord can do with a few who call Him to mind! Remembrance is the key to the subject but it is not the end.

We have previously seen that in immediate connection with the Supper the Lord called attention to the joy which He had had with His own. They were to His heart as the fruit of the vine. He had spoken of that joy being resumed under entirely new conditions. Did they ever forget that? We need to leave a lot of room in our minds for the consideration of that. A draught of wine, a sweet cordial to His heart, companionship with His own on earth — “With desire I have desired ...” It was the last act in a companionship full of sweetness to the heart of the Lord. The Lord indicated to them that that pleasure was to be continued in a new way in the kingdom of God after His death and resurrection. The disciples could never forget the Lord saying that! They had realised that the Lord had delight in them. “My delights were with the sons of men” Proverbs 8: 31; “To the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent thou hast said, In them is all my delight”, Psalm 16: 3. It was the wine of His soul, the companionship of His brethren. Has the Lord lost the desire for that? The Lord coupled the two things together, knowing and doing, when speaking to His disciples for the last time, John 13: 17. The Lord gives a sense all through those chapters of how He loved His own. The conviction, intense conviction of it, was borne in upon them, and is now upon our hearts. “I go to prepare you a place; and ... I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be”, John 14: 2, 3. Love must have the company of the loved objects; it is the desire of love. The presence of the Lord in the midst of His own is not merely privilege for us but joy for the Lord! His own joy brings Him into the midst of His own. When Christians respond to “This do” they form a circle; the centre is the remembrance. On the table there is the loaf and the cup; that is the centre, the remembrance; it brings the saints together and they form the circle. In Mark 3: 20 and 32 - 35, the Lord is the centre in the house and He is “looking around in a circuit at those that were sitting around him”. All were doing the will of God. The supreme will of God is that we should be in right relation with Christ. The Lord’s supper reconstitutes the circle. The circle of Mark 3 was broken in on by His death, but now the Lord’s supper reconstitutes the circle. His love brings Him; His own pleasure brings Him there. “Ye have heard that I have said unto you, I go away and I am coming to you”, John 14: 28. Supreme fact! The Lord loves to come in, and where the calling to mind has been He loves to come Himself. The will of God is that every lover of Christ should find his or her place there in that circle. “I am coming to you” is characteristic of the whole period during which the world would see Him no longer. It is a great spiritual reality that the

Lord comes to take His place in that circle which has been reconstituted by calling Him to mind. "If ye love me, keep my commandments ... I am coming to you", John 14: 15 - 18. The condition really is that we keep His commandments. If we have found our place in that circle and partake of the Supper to call Him to mind the conditions are there. You prove yourself (1 Corinthians 11: 28) as a subject of self-judgment and you are there to think of another Person. It works weekly. The Lord gave suggestions. He "came and stood in the midst" on two first days of the week (John 20: 19, 26). Later it is recorded of the saints at Troas, "And the first day of the week, we being assembled to break bread" (Acts 20: 7); the circle is reconstituted afresh and His delight brings Him there. The circle comes into evidence; the church is not invisible. That will never do! The expression 'the invisible church' was first made use of after corruption had set in. The Lord's supper is not invisible nor the company who eat it. That is the visible church! The Lord comes because of the joy He has in the companionship of His brethren. It is not a pitying and compassionate love like giving something to a poor beggar. We can say to the Lord, 'Here we are for Thee to delight in'. He comes in joy and He comes to sing. The bread and the cup are clothed with a spiritual significance and His joy is in His own. "And having sung a hymn" is the indication of a spiritual course. He comes in to sing! When He comes in He comes in to sing, not to rebuke nor to teach; He comes in joy. It is His real delight to come. He comes with delight. We get no example of the Lord singing in resurrection, but it is prophetically announced in Psalm 22: 22, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee". It is after the sorrows of atonement and the "horns of the buffaloes", after the whole work of glorifying God is completed. Our special title to it is in "I will confess to thee among the nations, and will sing to thy name", Romans 15: 9. The word translated 'sing' means in the original that the singer sings to a musical accompaniment, that there is a musical instrument to accompany him: "To the chief Musician. On my stringed instruments", Habakkuk 3: 19. Think of the assembly as the accompanying and responsive instrument! There is nothing to hinder the Lord from delighting His own heart with His own now. There is a tuned instrument to respond in accord with His singing. It is perfectly delightful.

The apostle could not say all he wanted to say to the Corinthians but he starts the saints on a line that will carry them into the blessedness of everything. The way into it is by way of the Supper. The truth of the Supper after nineteen centuries is restored to us: do not let us miss all that is contained in it.

We see, firstly, the Lord secures everything for us; secondly, joy is secured for Christ; and thirdly, everything is secured for God. Then we come to the mount

of Olives. We move up into all the blessedness of what is heavenly: "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God", John 20: 17. It leads us from the light of Matthew and Mark, intelligence as to the spiritual import of what the Lord did, on to the remembrance in Luke, a place for the Lord secured for Him to come to. Who can limit the blessing then? We cannot tell or prescribe what shall be if the Lord comes in as Head!

1 CORINTHIANS 11 (FOURTH READING)

1 Corinthians 11:26-34

CAC The truth is brought forward in this epistle in a corrective way. The saints at Corinth had evidently drifted quite away from what the apostle had communicated to them after a short time. This was evidenced by the want of unity amongst them. They were not really calling the Lord to mind; they were not giving His death the place which it rightly claimed.

Nothing has such unifying power as the Lord's supper. The memorials are symbolical of His death, so that in eating and drinking we do not announce the Lord in His life here, nor in His risen life; we announce the Lord's death. It is important that we should call the Lord to mind in connection with what came out in His death, because it is the greatest expression of His love. He will never again give such expression to His love as He did when He went into death. But the love that was expressed then remains livingly in Himself; so when He says, "In remembrance of me" it is Himself as having gone to heaven.

"Until he come" would fill up the whole period. He is coming, that is the great objective in view; but until He comes there is this public act which has a voice. It is what we do; "For as often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye announce the death of the Lord". It has a public voice; it speaks of the Lord's death. I do not think the point is quite to whom it is announced, but it is announced. It is the public object in view on God's part and it is continuously announced as long as the assembly is here. It is the importance of what is announced, the Lord's death. The question is, 'What is the voice?' not, 'Who hears it?' This act which the Corinthians had debased and degraded until it ceased to be the Lord's supper at all has an important voice. Nothing is more important than that the Lord's death should be witnessed in this world. It is the greatest and most wondrous thing in eternity; there is never going to be in eternity anything so wonderful as the Lord's death.

It brings out here the importance of the Supper and the importance of the public side of the Supper. There are two sides. There is the calling of the Lord to mind; that is internal. Then announcing the Lord's death is a public voice and that voice is heard in a powerful manner. The point is not whether there are any to hear it or not but 'What is the voice?' The voice is the Lord's death. Whatever the number may be who announce it does not alter the character of the voice. Of course it is supposed that the whole assembly does it. It is very pleasing to God that that death should be announced, and it is by a material act; it is a material, not a spiritual, thing.

There are only two institutions of a material character in Christianity, baptism and the Lord's supper. One is initial, that is, at the beginning, but both have reference to the death of Christ, and everything public must of necessity have reference to the Lord's death. By far the greatest thing that happened on the earth is His death, and baptism is the public sign of persons being identified with it. It is so also in the Lord's supper. We are so apt to be occupied with the resurrection and ascension side that we are liable to lose sight of the Lord's death. It is really when the Lord comes that there will be the most wonderful testimony to His death. Nobody then will be able to question that He is the One who died! It is set out in a detailed way here to call attention to the public and material character of the act; therefore doing it worthily is an essential matter.

Ques The great intent in the Supper is to announce that Christ has died on the earth, would you say?

CAC Exactly; that is what the world has to do with, the death of Christ. There was no calling Him to mind when He instituted the Supper; He was there. But now He is absent. He died and through death He has gone to the Father, and we know Him there in a way it was not possible to know Him in the days of His flesh. We must take note of that; we are far better off than they were then. In the days of His flesh neither Peter nor John had any idea that His love was so great that it would take Him into death. If we call the absent One to mind, all that was expressed in His death lives now in Himself, and the love in which He went into death now lives in His heart. He is no longer in death but is the living One, the One we may expect to come to us. We must remember that all that He said and did was founded on His death; none of it would have been possible apart from that. Now we know this great accomplished fact that He has been into death. All the love that was expended in His death lives in His own heart this minute.

Here Paul is speaking to establish in their hearts the great fact that the Lord died, for they were having a sort of love feast and not thinking of the Lord at all. The Lord's death has brought out His full devotion to the assembly; nothing can be added to that; and it has brought out the blessedness in which the saints stand as having part in the new covenant.

Rem The Hebrew bondman seems to fit here.

CAC Very beautifully. The Supper has in view the assembly as a company of persons down here in this world, in the wilderness position, understanding how the Lord has devoted Himself in love to them so as to awaken wifely affections towards Himself. That is the setting. And there is the blessedness of the new covenant as known to the assembly. He has brought it into the

assembly before it has its application to Judah and Israel. There is a company of persons, in the very place where they were converted, in the good of the new covenant, so that there is perfect liberty with God, and it has come about in the power of His blood. The cup as the new covenant is the basis of it all. The youngest believer should be assured of forgiveness, that his sins and iniquities are remembered no more, and should have his heart purified by the knowledge of God. All this has been brought about by the blood of the Lord and should affect us.

So it is to be done worthily, otherwise we come under judgment. It refers to what is public. It is not at all a question of examining ourselves to see whether we are converted or not, or reviewing our history, or even examining ourselves as to whether we have judged ourselves sufficiently. That is not at all what the apostle had in mind; but if it is the Lord's death it has a claim that all should be done with the utmost reverence. That was what was lacking at Corinth.

The eating and drinking is connected with the wilderness position. It is the beginning, and the Corinthians were in such a state that they were all wrong at the start. And so it is with us that if the Lord in His death has not His place with us we shall not be right anywhere. The apostle is rather adjusting us so that we shall not need adjusting when we come together. We do challenge our hearts there. Does the loaf represent to me the body of the Lord? Is that my apprehension of it? That is what it means to distinguish the Lord's body. If we do not see in it more than what is merely outward it is not the Supper.

The bread is consecrated by the Lord's own words. We do not consecrate the bread after we come together; we look at it as consecrated by His own words. The bread and the cup are before us as consecrated by the Lord's own words before a word is said by us. Well, have they that character in our minds? If not, we are better not there for we shall only bring judgment to ourselves. They are clothed by the wonderful import of the Lord's own words. They are not just bread and wine, though they have not been changed. We love to distinguish the loaf as the Lord's body. We must perform the service worthily, with deep reverence and regard for the One whose body and blood it is. To do it unworthily is to disregard them. The Lord said, "This is my body" and "This is my blood". It is not that they have been changed, but they have become that by the Lord's institution. If we eat and drink in reverence, receiving them as the body and blood of the Lord that we are engaged with, of course symbolically, it must correct all disorder. And then it is a 'calling of Me to mind'; we think of the Lord affectionately in all the power of His love expressed in death. For it is the same love exactly in glory; there is not one love in death and another in glory. These things would make us intelligent in

what we actually do; it is not a question of state of heart but a certain public act which the saints do. If realised it would have a most powerful effect on us practically. We could not go on with what is inconsistent with His death and that, of course, is a most searching exercise.

The Lord was actively dealing with the Corinthians. "On this account many among you are weak and infirm, and a good many are fallen asleep". The Lord could not countenance the unworthy manner in which they were carrying on; He could not tolerate it. And I suppose that there has never been anything altogether like it since. I expect the apostle's letter corrected the public disorder in the assembly from that time onward. So there should be a profound reverence shown in keeping this holy institution. It is touching that in chastening His own it is that their spirits might be saved. It was the chastening of His love that His saints might be free of what was unworthy of Himself and of His supper.

I suppose that after this was written the custom of having a meal beforehand ceased and the Supper was left in its own blessedness. When the hour is come is what governs us now. We ought not to need to wait for one another. Where things start is in thinking of the Lord's love in death; and it is the same for the youngest as it is for the eldest, so that we all start together. How far we can go in the service depends, of course, on our spiritual stature, but we can all start together. I am sure that if the death of the Lord had its place with us it would correct everything that is wrong or disorderly. If there is anything of that with us it is due, I believe, to some lack in the appreciation of His death. It is the calling of Me to mind — it is that great 'Me'. If there are any things to be adjusted they are to be adjusted beforehand. The normal feeling of every saint is that he must put things right before he comes to the assembly.

The apostle knew that there was capacity in the saints at Corinth for them to be affected by the reading of this chapter, and they were affected. There was a complete turning inside out as a result. Well, that is what the truth of the Supper would effect.

1 CORINTHIANS 12 (FIRST READING)

1 Corinthians 12:1-13

CAC The apostle brings back the truth of the Lord's supper as the rallying point of the assembly, but he does not pursue the subject. He does not go on to tell us anything of the assembly service which would normally follow the Supper; he does not say a word about the Lord taking His place in the midst. I suppose the state of the Corinthians was such that they could hardly enter into these subjects. It was necessary before they could understand the spiritual service of the assembly that they should understand the subject of spiritual manifestations, so he brings them in in this chapter, I believe with the object of shutting out all action of the flesh and of the natural mind.

He had told the Corinthians very plainly that they were carnal, not spiritual, and the object of his writing in this chapter is to bring about the recognition by the brethren of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. As we do so we become spiritual, and as we become spiritual we become qualified for the spiritual service of the assembly. Although he could not talk about it, no doubt the apostle had that in his mind.

Ques Would you say that up to the point of the actual Supper we have what is prescribed — what is done and how it is done? But from that point nothing is prescribed; their state was not equal to the spiritual side.

CAC What follows the Supper is a spiritual matter. The Supper is a material act and a matter of obligation for each saint. But after eating the Supper there is surely to be some result Christward and Godward. He does not enter into that, because the recognition of the Spirit and His operations was a necessity before that could be entered upon. It is a matter of spiritual discernment. When brethren began to break bread about 110 years ago, they had not the slightest idea of the prescribed order, and we have still to learn; we have not reached finality as to the prescribed order of the assembly. There was a great development of the spiritual in the second epistle. The first thing is that we recognise the presence and operations of the Holy Spirit in the body.

The universal character of the body as the organism in which the Spirit operates must be recognised first. The Lord's supper is always local, but the presence of the Spirit and His operations in the body are universal. As this is understood it would preserve us from any thought of independency. We have to take up the truth of this chapter as light from God — we have to come to it. Nobody comes to the truth of this chapter until he comes to it as divinely taught.

We ought all to have keen discernment as to what is of the Spirit. There is nothing to indicate that the Spirit of God is now here, except as His presence becomes manifest in the saints. There is nothing outward; you cannot show any one the Spirit.

Ques How can you recognise the Spirit?

CAC I know no other way of recognising the Spirit than by observing what people say — that is the test he brings before us at the very opening of the chapter. That is always the test; we test everything by what they say. If a man is speaking in the Spirit he will not say, "Curse on Jesus". There are people who speak slightly of Jesus; that cannot be the Spirit of God. They cannot detract from His Person — Jesus, and His office — Lord Jesus. The office is where He is set by God. If any one deviates from these two things you do not listen to him for a minute. You recognise in the way a person speaks that he personally has been subdued to the Lord, and that is a great principle. If his whole moral being has not bowed down to the Lord Jesus, if any one is going on in a way that is contrary to this epistle, you cannot think that he is speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit. If I am not subdued to the Lord Jesus in my spirit the Holy Spirit will have no dealings with me, will He? There were at this time numbers of Jews in the assembly who were ready to say, "Curse on Jesus". Any real Jew would say it today.

Rem "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?"

CAC People who do not the things which He says have no title to say "Lord Jesus". Those going on with a religious system have no title. The Holy Spirit helps those through whom He speaks to move on the line of the Lord's will — His will directs everything. So what we say takes character from that and it is the great test. John says, "Believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits if they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world".

So that having spoken of these great tests in verse 3, he goes on to speak of the gifts and services and operations that go on in the assembly universally as the body.

Ques Is there a difference between the assembly and the body?

CAC There is a distinction made in this chapter.

You would not find that God set the apostles in the body.

In the assembly there is a certain order; there is a ministerial order, which makes a great difference. If the apostle Paul came in here we should all be quiet. In the assembly things are graded but in the body all the members

function unitedly. There is no rivalry, no partiality; you do not think of saying you prefer one member to another.

Ques Suppose they do not function?

CAC Well, that is paralysis. At the present time the body viewed in the Corinthian aspect is paralysed, but that does not hinder two or three persons who are walking in the truth and speaking in the Spirit from realising the truth of the whole assembly. In the christian profession this chapter has ceased to exist. The assembly down here on earth in its universal aspect (that is, the body in the sense of Corinthians) has disappeared from view.

But God has given exercise so that a few individuals have come back to the truth of it, recognising that the Holy Spirit is here manifested in the body. We assume to hold the truth but then the truth in our minds extends to every saint on the face of the earth. It must do so, for the body is composed of those who have all been baptised by one Spirit "into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit". Then the assembly is seen as in organic unity with the same gifts, services and operations, throughout the world. The divine thought is that what is universal comes into action locally. When we look at the loaf and the cup we are doing what all the saints should be doing. We get at it in a practical way by looking at it locally. It is composed of men and women who were in the world once but now have come into this organism, whether Jews or Greeks, bondmen or free.

We must dismiss the thought of meetings altogether from this chapter; it is Lord's day morning to Saturday night. The body is here that the presence of the Spirit may be manifested all the week long. The gifts and services and operations of God are going on all the time. You could have all this chapter without a meeting at all.

Ques How does Matthew 18 apply?

CAC He speaks of the assembly in Matthew 18 (the two or three) as administering on His behalf. There is a tribunal to which the erring brother can be brought, so while we cannot get the assembly together practically, He makes it possible with two or three. So it is with us.

It is not the Person of the Lord in this chapter, but the Holy Spirit, and the intent of the Spirit to come into manifestation. It is given to each brother and sister to be a vessel for the manifestation of the Spirit. It is all for profit and has nothing to do with the service of God. So we are always to be to the profit of the saints, and we shall only be so as we act and speak in the power of the Holy Spirit. In principle that is for the profit of the whole assembly.

It is rather striking that there is nothing in the gifts of the Spirit that cannot be taken up by sisters — of the nine operations enumerated here; Paul does not refer to ministerial gifts at all. Philip had four daughters who prophesied. Such a gift is a matter of the sovereignty of the Spirit. I cannot pretend to be somebody else. According to this chapter He has accorded to everybody some gift. If certain gifts are not there, we recognise the sovereignty of the Spirit in it. Some would insist that we ought to have healing, tongues, miracles and so on. Well, if the Spirit gave the gift of healing to a brother or sister we should be very thankful for it, but we should want to test it!

Rem It says, "In the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body".

CAC Is not that the key to the chapter in a way? That is, the gifts are all from the same Spirit, so they cannot possibly clash one with another. The Spirit confers certain capabilities on brothers and sisters, but in the actual service we must wait on the Lord for direction and support, not on the Spirit. The Spirit has qualified a brother but he waits on the Lord for direction as to how he exercises his gift.

There is something else going on at the same time; that is, God operating all the time on the souls of the saints. Is my service such as He can connect His operations with? If not, I had better drop it at once. So the body is a wonderful organism, where the Spirit is giving gifts and the Lord is directing the services and God operating so that it all becomes effective. Gifts given to persons involve capability from the indwelling Spirit to do certain things, and the way they do things is a manifestation of the Spirit here; it is in connection with what is public here.

Rem It speaks earlier in the epistle of the "testimony of the Christ".

CAC If we have not the inward qualities of the Spirit of Christ, we are not any good in the body. We cannot take up any service in the body unless we have that as a basis.

The aspect here is different from that in Colossians where the body exists to exhibit the greatness of Christ; but there is now a vessel for the manifestation of the Spirit, showing that He is down here. All that is extended in the gentile world. A word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, faith — these things are not limited to brothers. I think "faith" spoken of here would be given as it becomes necessary at some special juncture of the assembly. The Spirit might give it to a sister and she might take the lead in the whole assembly on the earth. Perhaps there is a deadlock in a meeting and by the Spirit some brother has the gift of faith and knows what to do and how to do it.

We observe the beautiful distinctions of the Spirit. We want them all to be different. You do not think of admiring one more than another, each is completely perfect and admirable if it is of the Spirit. The contemplation of it makes us feel how small we are in these things, how little we have entered into them. The discerning of spirits refers to what is said by spirits. There were demons speaking with tongues and so on, so such a gift was needed in the assembly. What takes away the perfection of Jesus or denies His lordship, for instance, is the work of a demon.

So the apostle takes up the thought of the human body as a figure and it all leads up to this, that there is something here on earth that He can call "the Christ". That is, there is an anointed body here on earth in which the operations of the Spirit are going on, and it manifests that the Spirit is here.

Rem And we are all baptised into one body.

CAC Yes; it is the body here that is "the Christ". So that it is really all Christ, because what is in the power of the Spirit of Christ is really Christ.

Ques Would you explain the difference between sealing and anointing?

CAC Is not sealing what we enjoy secretly with God? But the anointing is what is public. That is the line of the chapter.

Rem We "have all been given to drink of one Spirit".

CAC It is beautiful. We just wanted that for a finishing touch; it is the essence of the whole matter. Before we begin to manifest the Spirit we have our own secret with God; we know the virtue of the Spirit for inward satisfaction and joy. Every christian who does not grieve the Spirit has the same joy; that is why the saints fit so well together. The result is that these different operations of the Spirit are unchecked; I know the Holy Spirit is dwelling here.

Ques Do we not get it in John 4 and John 7, inward satisfaction and then the flowing out?

CAC Oh, these things are delightful to contemplate,

and we want to get on our knees about them, so that the living organism is not only talked about but seen.

1 CORINTHIANS 12 (SECOND READING)

1 Corinthians 12:13-31

CAC It would appear that baptism in Scripture always suggests a coming on to entirely new ground. John's baptism brought people on to the ground of repentance, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit brings people to the one body — an entirely new ground in this world. The body appears to be spoken of in this chapter as the vessel in which spiritual manifestations take place. It is the vessel of the operations of the Spirit, and the different gifts which he in the distribution of the Spirit are regarded as the different members of the body.

Ques The body is one. Is that the thought of unity, or is it that there is no other vessel like it contemplated?

CAC I think it is that there is a certain organism here on earth in which the operations of the Spirit are found coming out in various distinctive gifts, but all necessarily one because they are all in the power of the same Spirit. It is the one and the same Spirit that constitutes the unity.

This is how souls would reach the truth of the one body as a subsisting reality down here. They would reach it in the operations of the Spirit in the diversity of the gifts in the body down here. It is not reached in a doctrinal way, but realised experimentally in an anointed body down here. The manifestations of the Spirit are entirely limited to the body.

The human body is the figure all through; that is, it has many members, but they are all constituent parts of the one body. The human body is the underlying conception in this chapter. I suppose the human body is the most wonderful thing we have in nature. People have however become so accustomed to the working of the human mind in the things of God that they do not recognise the working of the Spirit.

The divine conception is a wonderful one, based on the human body, and the human body is not like any other body. It was not only created and made, it was *formed* directly under the hand of God: in Genesis 2: 7, 8 it says, "Jehovah Elohim formed Man, dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" and then, "Jehovah Elohim ... there put Man whom he had formed". There is the thought of formation connected with the human body, so the psalmist could say, "I am fearfully, wonderfully made ... and in thy book all my members were written; ... when as yet there was none of them", Psalm 139: 14, 16. That is, the formation of man's body was the result of divine counsel. It was written in the book before ever He took the dust in His hand.

I have no doubt when God took Adam's body and formed it in His hand, He had in mind the baptism of the Spirit.

If God forms something it cannot possibly be improved upon, and so the body is really a divine formation that is perfect as a whole and in all its parts. You may say that we cannot contemplate such a thing. Well, you must contemplate it! It is not the body in the Colossian or Ephesian sense at all, but in the Corinthian sense.

The members, each one, are all distinctive, but each member is part of a whole. We have to merge our individuality, which few of us are prepared to do, so that we take in the thought of the whole body in our minds. This body is a substantial thing. When you think of it you break your heart over the denial of it, but the truth comes home to us. The mass of christians have no idea of merging in the body; they maintain their individuality, and those active in service almost maintain their isolation. We are brought into an organism and every member is to move as recognising the one body, but how few of us have learned to move in the one body!

So we are made conscious that we are moving in the sphere of the body; we are moving bodywise, not individually. The baptism of the Spirit is made by many entirely an individual matter, but in Scripture it is not individual at all; we are merged into one body, and according to God it is a perfect organism. We cannot improve on the operations of the Spirit in the body.

Ques Would you distinguish between the baptism of the Spirit and being made to drink of one Spirit?

CAC Well, I think the baptism of the Spirit merges all who are the subjects of it in one divine unity. But there is an inward aspect of that; we have all been given to drink of one Spirit. That is, each has found his satisfaction in drinking of the Spirit. Therefore when a member of the body expresses his inward feelings, every other member of the body can say, 'Amen'.

Ques It is not automatic?

CAC It is a matter of power, I should say.

Ques The body is peculiar to this period; would you say it is unique?

CAC Paul's special ministry is viewed in this chapter as a temporary thing; not one of the features that mark it (see verses 7 to 11) will go into heaven. It is very important for us to understand the body in the Corinthian aspect. We are more familiar with the Colossian and Ephesian aspect, but in Corinthians it is an actual organism made up of Jews, Greeks, bondmen and free, and such persons merge in the power of the Spirit in the one body as a living organism

on the earth in which the operations of the Spirit are found. The body in Colossians and Ephesians is for the display of the graces of the heavenly Man. But this is not the Corinthian aspect which makes the Spirit's activity an experimental reality to all who come in contact with it. The wisdom of God in putting the members together in the body down here is perfect. So the saints in the truth of the body realise they are merged in the body, and they cultivate continuously the manifestations of the one Spirit; it is what all hearts are after. And therefore you find all members of the body are not equally important. The members cannot be suffered to individualise themselves; they are corporeally one, and have to learn to acknowledge that.

No doubt the Spirit of God foresaw what would come to pass and anticipated it. "If the foot say, Because I am not a hand I am not of the body", and the ear, "Because I am not an eye I am not of the body". There was the possibility of persons becoming discontented with their place in the body and refusing to function because they had not the same prominence as others!

Rem God has set the members in the body as it has pleased Him, and He has tempered the body together.

CAC That is most important, and no amount of labour or effort on my part can alter things. He has assigned a certain place to me in the body and I cannot get out of it without lawlessness. Each one is set in just the right way; I must not be discontented with what pleases God! All is according to design. He formed Man; there is an artistic formation in that. The body in the Corinthian aspect is a most wonderful conception, because every member is perfect, and functions in its own office; all function in unity, and the fact that you can only see it in the Bible makes it more precious. It required the bringing in of the gentiles to get the conception of the body. This would help our private exercises; we should pray more bodywise. I am ashamed sometimes when I take a backward view over my praying and see that it has been nearly all connected with myself. If you have once got a divine conception you cannot be content with anything else.

There are certain members of the body which seem to be weaker. "Much rather, the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary". He refers to the material body with a spiritual application. Of course it was to be seen in Corinth, where the saints had come under the baptism of the Spirit. This body order would be seen, and it would shut out all working of the flesh and the mind of man, and it would prepare the way most certainly for the thirteenth chapter.

Ques Philippians 2. 2 - 4 would come out, that would be the body idea?

CAC Yes, and it is good to remember that those members which seem the weaker are necessary; we have to accept that. That is, we must not discount a member because he seems to be weaker.

Then there are parts of the body less honourable in our esteem than other parts; there are members that seem lacking in honour. "These we clothe with more abundant honour"; that is, he brings in the thought of clothing. The thought is suggestive of beautifying a member that may be deficient in attractive qualities. We have to learn to clothe such saints with what is delightful. Clothing throughout Scripture carries with it the thought of adornment. God's thought was that man as a creature should not only have a body but clothing, that is, adornment. My impression is the clothing is what abides. The body features are going to pass away, but I venture to say the clothing does not.

Suppose I am less honourable than many of the gifts the Spirit has bestowed on the body, I have to admit that, but that is no reason why I should not be clothed with something more excellent than the gifts of the Spirit which are all temporary and will pass away — not one will go to heaven. That is, the gifts are all subordinated to love. I think he gives the clothing in chapter 13. Many of us have to accept the fact that we have a less honourable position than others and we shall never prosper until we do. But I think God brings in what is eternal and belongs to perfection and He clothes members with it — that is open to every saint.

Rem Paul says, "To me, less than the least of all saints", Ephesians 3: 8.

CAC He would have some difficulty to get smaller than that! There is another order of things coming in and the one least distinguished in the body may have part in that. I am to give myself more to the things which abide.

That is, love abides, the gifts are passing. You love to think there is a way of more surpassing excellence. We are no good whatever on earth until we have learned our place in the body. But there is something greater than that — the way of more surpassing excellence, and one most inferior as to his place in the body can be exalted to the highest possible degree in the experimental knowledge of love. So there is something to go in for! If I were the greatest gift in the body, I should exercise it in the conviction all the time that it will pass away. But when I move in love I am conscious that I am on the line of what is eternal.

We have no reason to believe that the historical church ever stood in the truth of the one body. This lies at the very root of things; if I do not function at

home every day, I am not much use in the assembly, am I? It is delightful to be in a circle where you are made conscious that the Spirit is operating.

Rem The members are to have consideration for one another.

CAC That is there is no selfish consideration in the body. The members have the same concern one for another, it must be so.

1 CORINTHIANS 13

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Ques Is this chapter the way of more surpassing excellence?

CAC Yes, it certainly is. We have seen in chapter 12 that the body is composed of many members, the Spirit having set the gifts in the body in His own sovereignty, and that each has to function in its place, but you do not exactly get the life of the body in chapter 12.

Ques Is it more in the nature of what is potential then?

CAC Yes, and what is functional; the members function, the figure used being that of the human body. The members all function where set, and in harmony; but the life of the body is not in the members; in the natural body the life is in the blood. Paul comes here to that which constitutes the life of the body without which there could be no functioning rightly in any of the members.

Ques Are you suggesting that love is equivalent to the blood in the natural body?

CAC Yes, I thought so.

Ques You have in your mind the thought of the life being in the blood?

CAC Yes. The Spirit is seen in chapter 12 as forming the body and the vessel in which certain gifts function. Well, that is one side of the operations of the Spirit, what we might perhaps call the external side.

Ques The Spirit is not mentioned in this chapter. In Romans the Spirit is life; what is the difference?

CAC We have to recognise that the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, is not only active in the way of conferring gifts, which operate in power by the Spirit, but He is also operating on the line of love and that is internal. The gifts are external, indeed they are spoken of as manifestations; but then there is also the power, the working of the Spirit on the line of life, so that the body can be a living organism animated vitally by love. No gift that is not operating in that way is operating vitally. It has often been said that chapter 12 is power, chapter 13 is love, and chapter 14 the spirit of wise discretion.

The apostle therefore does not hesitate to say that if he had the most remarkable gifts and was lacking in love, he had nothing. He says it of himself. When Paul is going to say anything particularly strong, he likes to say it of himself.

If we think of it, how could it be in any spiritual sense the body of Christ if it were not animated by love? It would be an impossibility. It is good for us to accept the fact; we are only in the body of Christ as moved by love.

It is such a character of love as could not have been found in Old Testament times. There could not have been a body in the Old Testament in that sense; there was no power adequate for the forming of a body in love.

Ques Do we need exercise as to it?

CAC The difficulty really in apprehending the truth of the body is the immensity of what is involved in it. We can all accept that the saints are the body of Christ, and so they are. The Corinthians are called the body of Christ, but there was not much exercise as to their *being* it in a vital sense.

Rem Ephesians shows the body building itself up in love.

CAC Very helpful. When we come to the body in its highest aspect we find inward energies of the body are for the self-building up of itself in love. The Ephesian gifts act towards the body; they are in a sense external to the body. The gifts in the body in 1 Corinthians 12 are actually members in the body. Then at the end of chapter 12 there are gifts set in the assembly which is a different thought again.

Ques Would the exercise of gift produce this?

CAC Yes, I think it is clear that there might be much gift and little love. The Corinthians came behind in no gift. They had a wonderful enrichment in the line of gift but were going to law with each other, showing that the gifts were no help at all there. Love would have put that right. If love is not there, God is not in the matter and it is absolutely worthless. Gift is a manifestation of love; it operates in love if it is genuine and the love is greater than the gift. We meet a brother sometimes of whom we say that his spirit is greater than his gift. The gifts will pass away, love goes on. Paul is seeking to clothe us with that which we can carry to eternity. The divine conception is a wonderful one, and you could not think of Christ having an imperfect body. I suppose undue importance was being attached to gift at Corinth. It was gift that was not being exercised in love but was making much of the person who had it.

Rem It was destroying the vital thought of what the body really is.

CAC It would seem they had been priding themselves on their ability in the speaking of tongues, but using them for self-display. God was not in it. Paul wanted a state of things at Corinth that would affect an unconverted man if he came in, so that "falling upon his face, he will do homage to God, reporting that God is indeed amongst you". That is what we would like. It is not that he

would say, 'What wonderful men and what gifts' but "God is indeed amongst you".

We need to take up this chapter as encouragement. It has often been said how humbling it is to read it, but I do not think the apostle wrote it to humble them, but as alluring them, that they might follow this wonderful character of love. He indicates how it would behave, and how we need to behave. We should do well to ask ourselves, 'How would love behave in this case?' If we can answer that question we have a solution to all our problems. It was all exemplified in the Lord. Love has been set forth perfectly in Him, and particularly, of course, in His death. The Lord's supper is the point where we learn love. We learn it as revealed in divine Persons — in God and in Christ — so that we possess it. He says nothing about our loving. He regards love as something we possess. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love" and in verse 2, "but have not love", and again in verse 3, "but have not love". It is not what I do, it is what I possess. I shall never give any expression of love until I possess it. It is really the apprehension of love in divine Persons; we have it there, but it is to become formative in us.

Peter shows us how the promises make us partakers of the divine nature. If we lay hold of them, they bring us into the knowledge of the nature of God in such a way that we become partakers of it. It is supposed to take practical form in us, so he later on tries to show us how love will be there. If I have it, it is bound to affect me in a practical way.

Rem "Love has long patience". Patience is very practical; we test each other a good deal on that side.

CAC It is indeed. You mean, we have patience, but after a while we lose it! The point with love is, after it has been tested it remains kind. It is a wonderfully attractive thing and the saint is entitled to say that that is his nature, and if anything is exhibited that is contrary to it, it is the flesh; it is something hateful to God and hateful to him. It has been said that this chapter is like a picture on the wall. It is not intended to be a mere picture on the wall, but seen in the saints. Paul is bringing these things out to allure the saints with them; they are to be adorned with the divine nature; if they are not, they are no good to God or man.

Ques How do we arrive at it?

CAC I suppose that, according to Corinthians, it is by means of the Lord's supper, which is the fresh start of our spiritual life every first day of the week. The loaf and the cup are not set before us that we may merely look, but that we may eat and drink, and we eat and drink our way into divine love. So each

week we have a fresh start, a spiritual meal. Eating and drinking implies the building up of our spiritual constitution. The Lord's supper is the great tangible expression of divine love that will never be repeated. It will never be expressed again to all eternity. And we are to live on it, so that our spiritual constitution is formed in love.

The thought of eating and drinking comes in in this epistle and it is much emphasised in chapter 11. It suggests that the spiritual effect of doing so is to build up our constitutions. What good is it unless I come to the Supper with the idea of getting a fresh and deepened impression of it? If I do not, I am not in a condition to come. It is right to take account of the symbols because the Lord has appointed them, and we should regard them with the greatest reverence as divinely selected. They are not appointed by a man at all. It is well to contemplate the loaf and the cup, but there is the eating and drinking; that is, they are to be appropriated. That is how we get the formation in the divine nature; we get it no other way except as contemplating it in Christ. We do not get stature by being gifted. The greatest gift we could think of — an apostle — without love (and Judas was an apostle without love, which shows what a terrible thing it is) was the "son of perdition". We may be infants in stature while having outstanding gifts. Chapter 14 must be taken up in the good of chapter 13 or else there will be poor ministry meetings.

Ques Would Peter and John be gift and love combined?

CAC Yes, and the two work beautifully together in the Acts. We can all come into this. I may be small in gift but great in love. Gift is limited but there is no limitation in the divine nature — love. This is all to draw us in a practical way into the truth of the body. I am nothing in the body if I am not characterised by love. It is no good to say I am small; I am nothing! So I have to pursue these things. According to the working of God in me I harmonise with them. They are not uncongenial to me, they are attractive to me.

Ques Would you explain verse 9, "For we know in part"?

CAC Well, I think at the end of the chapter he reminds us that we are actually in an infantile state.

Ques Does it show the possibility of growing now?

CAC Does not this passage distinctly suggest the possibility of growth? Because he says, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I reasoned as a child; when I became a man, I had done with what belonged to the child". There is growth in the divine nature; we sing sometimes, 'In this Thy nature grow'. We have to accept our limitations according to our condition in flesh and blood. The apostle did not profess to know everything, for he

says, "Now I know partially" — that is, it is a partial thing now — "but then I shall know according as I also have been known". God has known us in Christ, but then I only know myself partially in Christ, I have a very limited and partial view of it. "When that which is perfect has come, that which is in part shall be done away". The saints in the glorified state will enter into it. We are known in Christ by God and nowhere else; but then we do not know ourselves in Christ as God does. Saints are known of God in Christ, but in the future saints will know themselves in Christ as God knows them in Christ. There will be love that pervades the whole scene; every one will be filled with love and be in a scene of love. And there will be no gift there; everything is perfect.

"Love ... bears all things". 'Bears' could be 'covers' so you do not expose a brother or sister; you do not speak of what is wrong in a brother or sister, but you speak to them of it. "Believes all things" — perhaps it is difficult for us to take that in. I think it means that you take account of the saints according to divine thoughts. "Love ... believes all things" is a general statement; it is the comprehensive way in which love acts. That would be distinctive of the body. If all kinds of distrust and suspicion are at work that is of the devil. The very thing that I complain of in another is likely to be the very thing that is working in my own heart; we know how true that is. Instead you count upon the same principle in action in others that is in yourself. You count on the same line of the working of God in others as in yourself; everything else is a sting in your conscience and you will never be happy until you put it right. That is going on in your brethren too all the time.

Was it not the very absence of love that made all the defects and deficiencies at Corinth? I am to go on with these features of love, and if I see any one doing wrong I am to speak to that person in love. Paul was doing that to the Corinthians, but it is all balanced. In chapter 5 a wicked person has to be removed; you must not use love to cover up sin in the sense of passing it by. It is good to be among the brethren and feel that the divine nature is operating in every brother and sister and we want to help that on and encourage it; Paul is showing that love never fails.

1 CORINTHIANS 14 (FIRST READING)

1 Corinthians 14:1-33

Ques Why is prophecy so important?

CAC The third verse sums up its value, does it not? And it is the great evidence of the presence of God amongst His people. We ought not to be content to be walking in a path of separation from manifest evil, or to be holding the precious truth that has come to us. We ought, surely, to be concerned that there should be evidence that God is amongst us.

Ques Would prophecy suggest present living communications from God?

CAC Yes, it suggests that God is near, "God is indeed amongst you". So that when saints are being addressed an unbeliever coming in falls down on his face. They are not preaching the gospel, or labouring to get at his conscience, the saints are being spoken to in such a way that the presence of God amongst His people is felt so that an unbeliever falls down on his face. That is something more than a good word!

Rem I am afraid we do not know much about having God with us in that powerful way, but it is normal.

Ques Does prophesying principally have the edification of the assembly in view, not the unbeliever?

CAC It does not suppose that the unbeliever is being addressed; but the felt power of God's presence amongst His people is such that it affects an unbeliever. That is a crucial test; how is an ungodly man affected who comes in? Such a one comes in not at all partial to what is going on. He is not very susceptible; but the presence of God amongst His people will make him fall down on his face. We do not often see that.

Ques I think you told us once that it was more important for God to speak to us than for us to speak to God; is that not so?

CAC Yes, I think it is. And God dwells and walks in holy places. He says, "I will dwell among them and walk among them". The saints are the holy places where God walks, so that priestly conditions are necessary.

Ques There is nothing said about the Spirit in this chapter; why is that?

CAC Well, that is the contrast between chapters 12 and 14; in chapter 12 you get manifestations of the Spirit, but in chapter 14 it is spiritual manifestations.

Rem I am afraid we do not know what you mean.

CAC Spiritual manifestations could only be among spiritual persons.

Ques Through the medium of spiritual persons?

CAC Yes, so that the real exercise underlying this chapter is that there should be priestly conditions — conditions suitable to the holy service of God. It is priests who draw near to God. The whole chapter is governed by the thought of spirituality — spiritual manifestations. Not a word is said in the chapter about the Holy Spirit. There is a good bit said about the spirits of the prophets, but nothing said about the Holy Spirit; it supposes that there are spiritual men who can voice the mind of God intelligently.

Ques Would you say that that character of atmosphere should mark all our comings together, an atmosphere that would bring an unbeliever to the ground on his face?

CAC Yes. We might say that the whole of this epistle would tend to the purification of the priesthood. In the last days of Israel's history the priesthood was defiled (Zechariah 3). There was a high priest, but he was clothed in filthy garments. That is very much the condition of things in the christian profession; the priesthood is defiled. The priesthood was defiled at Corinth; they were not maintaining spiritual conditions; and the apostle Paul laboured to get them cleansed from pollutions. He would take away the filthy garments from them and give them change of raiment and set a pure turban on their heads!

The result of the high priest being restored to his proper holiness and dignity is that God speaks of bringing in Christ as the Branch. Then there is the thought of a golden vessel and of oil flowing freely, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit". It seems to me that the idea in this chapter is that the assembly is a vessel, divine in character, and priestly, and the flow of what is spiritual is to be encouraged and promoted in every way.

Ques When you say he has the cleansing of the priesthood in view do you mean the whole assembly?

CAC Yes.

Rem The priests are also addressed in Malachi.

CAC Yes; if the kind of meeting contemplated here is to be restored it can only be restored in spiritual conditions.

Rem So that the cleansing of the priesthood would have a local bearing.

CAC Yes, I think so; chapter 14 is local. Chapter 12 is universal. The idea of the manifestations of the Spirit in chapter 12 is universal. The Spirit has distributed certain qualifications to serve in the whole assembly; certain gifts

are set in the whole assembly, and the whole assembly, Jew and gentile, are baptised into one body by the Spirit. It is the universal thought; he brings that in first. And then, before speaking of the working out of things locally, the beautiful 13th chapter comes in to show that it can only be worked out locally in the spirit of love, "Follow after love". Love has been set before us in chapter 11. The Supper brings before us the great manifestation of love, and what is set before us in the Supper is to be a model; everything in the assembly is to conform to the Supper as a model. The Lord said at the supper table, "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves". The precious character of His service is set forth in the loaf and cup. 'Now', He says, 'you are to move on that line; you are to follow after love'.

Prophecy would result in building up the saints in the knowledge of divine Persons, and it would have the effect of encouraging them in the face of all that is adverse around, and of consoling them in their many sorrows (verse 3). The church is in the place of sorrows, and needs consolation, so that a great element in prophecy is consolation. That character of ministry is so powerful that it makes an ungodly man fall down. He feels God is there.

Rem The presence of God would affect everyone.

CAC Yes, it lays bare the secrets of the heart. If God is brought in, the secrets of the heart are laid bare. Sometimes we think we have to give people a tremendous knocking about to get at their conscience; but if we could bring God in, that would do it.

Ques Would it be illustrated in the way Elihu comes in in the book of Job?

CAC Yes, he comes in and speaks for God; and God is in the still, small voice. He is not in the thunder or earthquake, but in the still, small voice. Prophecy does not mean a scathing word that withers up everybody.

Ques I suppose if it is of God, all that God says is in love, and the vessel would be characterised by that. It would be felt, would it not?

CAC Yes, I think chapter 13 is most important. We have the love of divine Persons brought before us in the Supper; the love of Christ and the love of God told out in their full extent; and then this wonderful picture of love acting in detail in chapter 13. We have love in its concentration set forth in the loaf and the cup. Divine love is concentrated there, and then the 13th chapter shews us love acting in detail. So that every kind of circumstance brings out some peculiar phase of love. Now that is the spirit in which a meeting such as chapter 14 speaks of can be profitably held, and it will be marked by many features. There will be positive building up in the knowledge of God. There will be encouragement; there are always troubled hearts that need

encouragement. And there will be consolation; saints are always in sorrow. If they have no personal sorrow they have the sorrow of the state of the world and of the state of the church; they always need to be consoled. And then there will be instruction; Paul says, "that I may instruct others".

Instruction, teaching, thanksgiving, prayer and singing; what a wonderful variety of spiritual activity! And every bit of it is giving evidence that God is amongst His people. We ought to covet that; we ought to pray for it very much; that the meetings shall be the evidence that God is amongst us. I do not think that we ought to be content to have nice times! We often speak of very precious things in a way that we enjoy, but we want more of the evidence that God is indeed amongst us.

Ques Would there be power in our meetings if God were with us?

CAC Yes, indeed.

Ques Would it have the same effect upon us as upon an unbeliever?

CAC I think so; the result would be to bring down everything that is of the flesh.

Ques When John said, "Behold the Lamb of God", did not he prophesy? It had effect upon his disciples.

CAC It did indeed, but he was probably not thinking of them. It has often been said that it was his involuntary exclamation. In prophesying one is thinking of the saints; one is soberly and intelligently thinking of their good.

Ques Does this contemplate a meeting specially convened for prophesying?

CAC Well, it speaks about the whole assembly coming together in one place. It seems to suggest that there would be opportunities for such a meeting.

Ques Is it a local meeting, not a district meeting?

CAC Yes, I think it is local.

Ques While it is local in its setting, would you think it wrong to have such a meeting if there were others invited?

CAC I should not think it wrong. It is remarkable that we are not told when to have it, or how often. The Lord never regards the assembly otherwise than as a company of intelligent persons. To Corinth Paul says, "I speak as to intelligent persons". And when such a meeting should be held is left to the intelligence of the assembly. It is rather striking that we have no account in Scripture of any word of prophecy in the assembly.

Ques What about Acts 13 — "Separate me now Barnabas and Saul"?

CAC Does not that refer rather to the prophets who were ministering to the Lord and fasting? It does not appear that it was in an assembly meeting. It is striking that Scripture furnishes us with no precedent of the kind of address that would be given in a meeting of this kind.

We have gospel addresses of Peter and Paul, and we have the addresses of Peter and James at the conference; but we have no record of any addresses given in the assembly. So that we are left to our own spirituality and intelligence to arrive at the proper kind of address. There is no model, and what a mercy! If we had an address of Paul's in the assembly somewhere, it might have been taken for a model, but the Lord would have us to prophesy according to the proportion of our own faith.

Rem I was wondering if that was the reason why there is no gift in this chapter.

CAC Well, gift is to be the subject of desire and prayer. If you can speak with a tongue and cannot interpret, it is not hopeless — "let him pray". A brother might have something on his heart, and not get it out very well, and perhaps be discouraged and never try again! But if he did not get it out very well, let him pray. I think if exercised and spiritual brothers would come forward when they have something of value, and would pray, they would be helped. I believe there is a great deal of latent wealth in the assembly. What is needed is more prayer for ability. This word, "let him pray", would apply to every kind of ability that is needed for edifying.

Mr. Raven said that he had no gift at all, but he wanted to serve the brethren and he prayed, and the Lord gave him a gift. The Lord is not a respecter of persons; if He would answer Mr. Raven's prayer, He would answer your prayer or mine. And think of Paul! At the end of his course he did not desire prayer that he might have more light, or that the Lord would give him more revelations; he had the whole wealth of the ministry of the glad tidings and of the mystery, but now he says, 'I want you to pray that utterance may be given to me, in the opening of my mouth'. He felt the need of help in the actual utterance of the things. He had them all in his heart; it is no good our trying to speak about something that we have not got in our hearts — that is important. A man may feel sometimes that he has got spiritual wealth in his heart, but having it in your heart does not always mean that you can bring it out, so we have to pray. If I have something precious about the Lord or about God, God gave it to me, and He gave it to me by His Spirit for the good of the assembly; now I have to pray for divinely conferred ability to bring it out. There is a very great difference between natural ability and the ability which God gives. A man may be able to talk well and quote Scripture, but there may

be nothing in it of spiritual worth; it is trading on natural ability and I dread it! I have often gone home after speaking, and asked the Lord, 'Was it just my ability or was it ability that God gives?' God is willing to give ability. This is not wanting something to make us important; it is the desire begotten in the soul by the enjoyment of divine love, and by the possession of divine substance. The man who has substance in his heart would say, 'O Lord it is so precious; do help me to serve it out to others. I have no ability; I cannot even put five words together, but Thou canst help me'.

This is what we need if we are going to have this kind of meeting. I believe there are lots of brothers amongst us who have never said a word in public, but they have the preciousness in their hearts, and if they would pray the Lord would give them utterance, and they would speak in the assembly perhaps for five minutes. "Five words", Paul says. Nobody would get weary of that address, would they? Nobody would say, 'When is he going to stop?' We ought to take these exercises very seriously, and especially the brothers who have to carry it out in a practical way, but the sisters should all be in sympathy with it; it is not an exercise for brothers only. When a brother who has never said a word before gets up, everyone is sympathetic; there is a sympathetic atmosphere. Everyone would be saying, 'Lord help him; he would never have got up if he had not something; now Lord help him'. A brother in bringing out what is in his heart, knows it is right because of its quality. He has not got up to give the saints a scolding, he has not such a thought in his mind; he is conscious that the thing before him, whether expressed in five words or five hundred, is edifying and encouraging. A word like that would stimulate and encourage another brother to add something.

Another brother has something in his heart which has a point of contact with what the other brother said; so he feels encouraged to get up and give his contribution.

Then there is a third, and by that time the saints have had as much as they can take in at once. I have said sometimes that a principle brought out in this chapter is that of the restriction of output. That is, it supposes there is a lot more there; the assembly is much more wealthy than we have any idea of. I have often been astonished when I have got alongside a brother that never said a word in public. I have just now in mind a young brother who had never said a word in public who came to see me one day when I was poorly. I did not feel like talking to him, so I thought I would just let him talk to me, and it was simply beautiful when that young man began to speak; what precious things he could say of the Lord. I believe we are far more wealthy than we have any idea of.

We have come under the blighting influence of Christendom; in Christendom nobody may speak but a minister.

Perhaps we are more under the influence of that idea than we have any idea of. A brother says, 'I am not gifted, it is not for me to think of saying anything', and he takes up no exercise as to prophesying, though the Scripture says, "Ye can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all be encouraged". He has really come under the influence of the clerical spirit. We need to have more to do with God, and to think of the spiritual value of what we have. We must not minimise the exceeding preciousness of what we have in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We should think, 'Now this is precious to me, and what is precious to me is precious to the whole assembly, and I would like to bring it out. I would like to say ten or twenty words just to let others share it'. Perhaps you might have to wait a bit; things of this kind never spoil by keeping. Preserve it and presently the opportunity will come. If we had more meetings of this kind, there would be more opportunity; presently the time would come when a brother would feel, 'This is just the time for that little bit that I have been carrying in my heart'.

In such a meeting as 1 Corinthians 14 contemplates nothing counts but what has spiritual value. And the man who has something from God is distrustful of himself. Paul had the whole priceless treasure of the mystery in his soul by the Holy Spirit, but he was so distrustful of himself in attempting to speak that he wanted the prayers of the brethren. The right spirit is for a brother to so distrust himself that he feels nothing will carry him through but the prayers of the saints. Paul begins this epistle by telling the saints how rich they were: "In everything ye have been enriched in him", the Head; and then in chapter 12 he brings out the wealth they had in the Spirit. The Spirit is distributing, and it seems to imply that everybody gets a share in the distribution of the Spirit (see chapter 12: 7). Now, as in the wealth of this, are we prepared to be at the disposal of the Lord and the Head?

Ques Why is there so much said about God in this chapter?

CAC The epistle is addressed to the assembly of God, and it is rather striking that there is nothing said in it about the presence of the Lord. You would not learn from this epistle that there was such a thing as the presence of the Lord. The nearest that comes to it is when he refers to the power of our Lord Jesus Christ in connection with dealing with a wicked person. But he does speak about the presence of God, "God is indeed amongst you".

Ques You would not suggest the restricting of prophecy to a meeting specially convened?

CAC No, but I think the morning meeting is not quite what is contemplated here. When the saints are convened to eat the Supper, the meeting has a peculiar character. But even then, I believe the Lord would give a word very much more often than we get one. I have been exercised for a long time as to why it is that in many meetings there is rarely a word from the Lord. I believe the Lord would more often give a word if we sought Him about it, and it would be a word that would stimulate thanksgiving and worship. Mr. Taylor was saying, during his last visit, that he thought that a word in the morning meeting ought properly to come soon after the Supper to confirm in the affections of the saints the impression of the Supper, and thus it would intensify the spirit of thanksgiving and worship. That thought commends itself to me.

Ques Has not there been a tendency to make it prohibitive to give expression to a word in the morning meeting?

CAC I think we have suffered from the idea that a word was rather out of place. But you will have noticed all the time that this idea has been influential amongst the brethren it has never affected the most spiritual men.

The most spiritual men amongst us have habitually given a word in the morning meeting. Now that ought to have had some effect upon us.

Rem It seems to indicate that there should have been a priestly state maintained, (Numbers 10: 8).

CAC I think that is important. It was said at the beginning that prophesying can only be taken up by spiritual persons. A spiritual person is not manufactured in a day. It is "spiritual manifestations" here; the Holy Spirit is not mentioned at all; it is the exercises and activities of spiritual persons in the assembly of God. There is no working whatever of natural ability or of the flesh contemplated, or of self-importance.

Every man who speaks has to be sensitive; he has to be on the alert all the time. As a word is being given the one who is giving it has to be sensitive that he may be conscious when the Spirit of God would use another vessel. "But if there be a revelation to another sitting there, let the first be silent". It indicates that a spiritual man would know when the Lord was going to act through another vessel. It shows that the Spirit delights to use different vessels. We might think that if the first speaks, if he was speaking spiritually, why could not the Spirit give him the revelation? But Paul suggests that the Spirit may be glad to use somebody else. However well one may be getting on he must be ready for the sovereign transfer to another vessel of what is edifying to the assembly. So a prophet has to be sensitive and to feel how long

he is supported. A man giving a profitable word ought to be, as it were, hanging on the Lord all the time, and ought to know when the Lord's support is no longer with him; he would then sit down at once; he would not say all that he had on his mind. Sometimes we have so much on our minds that we could go on for a week, but the question is, how much is the Lord supporting on this particular occasion? A brother may be supported by the Lord to a certain point, and if he had stopped at that point there would be a spiritual impression left on everyone. But if instead of stopping at that point he goes on, what he says after knocks out of the minds of the saints what he said before. We should often do more good if we were shorter in our addresses. I have no doubt that Paul knew exactly how far the Lord supported him. And I believe when the moment was reached that the Lord was not supporting him any longer, he would have sat down.

Rem It has been said that if a brother takes part by giving a word in the morning meeting it is a levitical word, and has been called for by the meeting being in a low state.

CAC There may be such a thing as that. We have the Lord's own words to the assemblies, and they took account of the moral conditions; there may be times when that has to be done, but that is not quite normal. If the Lord has to call pointed attention to things that are wrong, it is not normal assembly exercise, but it may be necessary. I have heard even in a morning meeting a word of very searching character, and sometimes everybody has felt that it was a needed word.

Ques Would you consider that a prophetic word?

CAC Yes, I should.

1 CORINTHIANS 14 (SECOND READING)

1 Corinthians 14:1-35

CAC In chapter 12 we were seeing how the body was formed, and we saw that the members were viewed as vessels in which the manifestation of the Spirit takes place. If this is to work in a practical sense we can all see that the animating power of the body must be the divine nature. So chapter 13 comes in to show that the gifts only serve their purpose as they are moved by love.

Chapters 12 and 13 do not contemplate the saints as being together at all. We are members of the body of Christ at all times, and all the members are to function properly at all times. There are no differences in chapters 12 and 13 between brothers and sisters; all are on one footing; all are vessels for the manifestation of the Spirit and for the operation of the divine nature. It is not what is for God, but rather what is for the mutual benefit of the members of the body. As members of the body of Christ we are set together permanently for mutual benefit and comfort and to co-operate as vessels of the Spirit.

Whether we have ever seen each other does not matter in the least. I think it is a full time occupation in chapters 12 and 13; we are never off duty! There are no off-times when I can say I am not of the body of Christ. We have to see things as they are presented in Scripture and if two persons are in the light of it they can walk in the light of it and, in measure, in the power of it. They will benefit each other and there would be manifestations of the Spirit. Manifestations of the Spirit are not limited to occasions when we are together. If in visiting we bring spiritual comfort and help to a sick person they are spiritual manifestations.

Chapter 14 has to do with the saints as together, and now the action is limited to the men. When together we look for the saints to act intelligently; we do not look for the leading of the Spirit when together — there is no such thing in Scripture.

Ques What are spiritual manifestations?

CAC You are to covet to have them. The activities of the members are their own responsibility, acting, of course, in the Spirit and subject to the Lord. "And spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (verse 32). Verse 30 is a matter of revelation; that is, some brother is inspired of God to make a revelation so the first is to be silent because another has a communication direct from God. We do not get revelations now. We have to remember that in the apostles' days all the Scriptures were not written. The chapter makes it very clear that the gift of tongues was too much in evidence: it was distinctly miraculous; in itself it

did not possess any power of edification. If there was no interpreter, the speaker must be silent. But there is a selection of gifts and Paul presses upon us that we should make a selection of what we desire. In speaking, a man must be satisfied he is giving the mind of God, speaking as the oracles of God. "Love is not emulous", 1 Corinthians 13: 4. That is, we are not to desire to be somebody else. But here you may be emulous: you are set at perfect liberty to get spiritual manifestations — to get something for yourself.

Tongues have evidently ceased in the public history of the church; they did not continue long after the apostles' day. Since their day we have never known tongues in connection with the truth; they always appear to be connected with error in doctrine.

In verse 3 we get something like a definition of prophecy. That is to be coveted, to edify the assembly, to build up the assembly in the knowledge of divine Persons. In this chapter they are not together for the service of God; it is not the assembly as convened by the Supper. This character of meeting has been in abeyance for many years but there is nothing to hinder us from having it. A word would not be given at the Supper with the thought of prophecy or teaching or instruction, but a word would be given that would stimulate the service of God; it would not be so much for the benefit of the saints. This chapter is for the benefit of the saints, not for the service of God. It is a meeting which gives very great scope for a variety of ministry. A word after the Supper must be suited to the occasion and is therefore limited; but on this occasion there is no limitation; there is room for a great variety of ministry. The word after the Supper should be in line with the object — praise Christward or Godward.

"He that prophesies speaks to men" (verse 3). Prophecy is the utterance of a man who has a word from God for His people. A prophetic meeting has conditions under review, meeting every condition of soul present, even that of an unconverted man. I have seen such an one literally fall on his face on the floor.

Every brother should take up this exercise. Scripture does not contemplate a silent brother. It is open to every man to tell the Lord he earnestly desires to contribute something that will edify the assembly. It is want of exercise with us. I settle down to thinking God will never use me. Well, if I think that, He will not!

All ministry now must be according to Scripture.

Scripture is a wonderful treasure-house; but a prophet has to do with God, so he comes *from* God with a word suited to His people. Every form of ministry in

this chapter can be found in Scripture and we come into the good of it as we come under the power of it. There is much for encouragement, and comfort, and edification; that is the advantage of such a meeting as this.

Rem "The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus", Revelation 19: 10.

CAC That is the summing up of all prophecy. It is all comprised under that head. It all centres in that Person, we might say that kind of Man. Every feature found in Scripture that is pleasing to God is found in Jesus.

All speaking when the saints are together should be intelligible. That is an important principle. "I will pray .. with the understanding; ... I will sing also with the understanding" (verse 15).

Rem There is nothing in christianity that is not to be understood.

CAC Quite so. A brother speaking intelligently would take account of the capacity of his hearers, whether new-born babes in Christ, or mature believers.

In a mixed company it is important that there should be a bit for the smallest babe. We have not only affections that need to be ministered to, but minds, capacity for understanding, and they need to be ministered to. Instruction is a great matter. Some of us know very little yet; we need instructing. The Lord refers to the prudent servant who knows how to give the measure of corn in season.

Well, this power of edification should be found in every company of saints, and there should be much prayer about it and an earnest seeking to have part in it. The Lord would have us all contributing to the edification of the assembly.

1 CORINTHIANS 14 (THIRD READING)

1 Corinthians 14:18-40

CAC It is evident from this chapter that the saints are supposed to be capable of judging what is to edification. All are under responsibility in regard to the matter. There is no liberty granted to what is not edifying. He says as to prophecy, "Let the others judge". That is, we are to exercise our judgment on everything that is done in the assembly. Each brother that takes part does so intelligently, that is, with his mind; he does so in the exercise of his understanding. If a man spoke a thousand words not in the power of the Spirit it would not edify and would be of no use.

Ques What would be the basis of their judgment?

CAC The basis of their judgment is their own spiritual understanding. Every spiritually minded person in the assembly will be conscious whether what is said is edifying and encouraging, making much of divine Persons and of the truth, and if there is instruction in it and profit. Everything is controlled by the mind in the assembly.

Rem That is, subject to the Spirit, I suppose.

CAC The Holy Spirit personally does not enter into this scripture; but here the intelligence which is formed by the Spirit is in the saints, their minds renewed as they walk in the Spirit. In chapter 10 Paul says, "I speak as to intelligent persons". The assembly is normally composed of intelligent persons. Those who take part do so intelligently and intelligibly. The importance and value of prophecy is stressed right through this chapter. The apostle is anxious that they, and we, should attach great value to what is edifying.

Those who speak with tongues today can generally give no account of it whatever. I have sometimes asked such to give me a sample of the ministry received; I have never yet obtained an answer.

Rem At Pentecost there was the speaking with tongues.

CAC Yes, there were a number from various nations present, and they said they heard every man in his own tongue the great things of God. It was most intelligible.

The apostle gives the utmost liberty for prophesying: "Ye can all prophesy". If a man has a word from God there is liberty for him to give it. He exercises his own mind on it and the saints exercise their minds on it. If they judged a word was not of God I suppose they would tell him of it.

Rem This chapter seems to stress the orderliness of the assembly. All is governed in intelligence by the mind.

CAC Paul says, "In your minds be grown men". There is to be maturity and sobriety. Indeed the presence of God is to be realised according to verse 25 and also verse 33. Things are to be done comelily and in order, and saints have proved for a number of years that it is possible to have perfect order without any human arrangement whatever.

Ques Was the conviction of the unconverted man caused by the prophecy raising a question that touched something in his own heart? It says, "The secrets of his heart are manifested".

CAC Yes, there is great conscience searching power in the word of God.

Ques What does a simple person mean?

CAC Well, I suppose it would be an uninstructed believer. There are those who have a certain trust in the Saviour, but they do not know their right hand from their left, as we say; but then they get help when they come into the assembly. From this we understand that these meetings are open for all. It is possible for simple persons and unbelievers to come in. There is nothing to hinder their coming; we like to see them.

The apostle does not suggest to us that the assembly will come together in this way and nothing be ministered. If this is the divine order it is a question of faith. We can count upon God and upon the Lord to be faithful to supply what is needed. It supposes that we do not come to such a meeting empty. Usually the test is what is edifying on a particular occasion. It does not follow that every prophet is to speak on the same line. The question is whether it is suitable for the occasion, or will it keep for a month or a year. Spiritual things do not deteriorate by being kept but acquire increase and quality. Sometimes I feel the most edifying thing I can do is to keep quiet.

The spirits of prophets should be under control. I have no respect for a man who says what he did not intend to say, for it is not God's way. Balaam was made to say what he did not intend to say! The prophet speaks with understanding; he feels there is a need for what he is saying, otherwise he should not say it. And the saints answer to it. We all know how good it is if a suitable hymn is given out; well that is like having a psalm.

Ques What would you say about revelation?

CAC We have not revelation today; then they did not have all the Scriptures. The mind of God was communicated by inspiration. That was not exactly in the responsibility of men. We do not look for revelation; it is completed: the

ministry of the mystery completed the word of God. When people set up to have revelations we do not credit what they say. But I think the principle here applies. A brother may feel another has a more prophetic word than he has and may sit down. I remember once a brother sat down; another got up directly and a man was converted on the spot: that was putting it into practice. We ought all to be prepared to give way to something better.

Ques Why is the number of prophets limited to three?

CAC I think it is that the Lord knows some brothers have an unlimited capacity for communicating the truth, but the saints have a limited capacity to receive! Mr. Raven said he did not think the saints were able to take in more than three thoughts on any one occasion. That is, a brother gets up with the presentation of one thought and he develops it and a second does the same and a third the same, and then the saints have had enough.

Rem Subjection is very important.

CAC So that everything is under control. "God is not a God of disorder but of peace". Anything discordant cannot be of God. The instruction as to the women being silent is important as being of the divine order.

The saints were to recognise that the word of God had not proceeded from them. It had come to them and they were to be in subjection to it. It had not come to them only; it had come to all the assemblies, and they were all to come together in subjection to it. So everything is tested by the Lord's commandment, and if a man thought himself to be a prophet or spiritual he was tested by his subjection to it. There will always be blessing and edification where there is subjection to the authority of the Lord. He undertakes to bring about what is for His own glory and the glory of God.

If a man is ignorant, let him be simple and take that place. You generally find that those who are ignorant and want to learn get on all right.

Of course, we all know that this is an order that is entirely set aside in christendom generally, but that is no reason why we should set it aside.

1 CORINTHIANS 15 (FIRST READING)

1 Corinthians 15:35-50

CAC I thought we might consider what is going to be gathered up in resurrection, and the glory with which God is going to clothe His saints in that world. It would be a very good thing for us to have more faith of resurrection.

Ques Why do you emphasise the faith?

CAC We all believe, as Martha did, that the dead will be raised, but has the moral force and import of it got hold of our souls so as to exert an influence on our every-day lives? If so, we should be ordering our lives, not in view of this present world, but of the resurrection world. A great deal depends on whether we are living in view of this age, or the age to come. You cannot live for the age to come except in the faith of resurrection. Certainly one who is living a self-indulgent life has not the faith of resurrection; he is on the line of, "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die". We may say, as all Christendom does, 'I believe in the resurrection of the dead', but it is quite another thing to have the faith of resurrection. Those who have that faith want to live on the line that there should be something God can raise for His world.

The Corinthians had not the faith of resurrection; they were living vain-glorious, self-indulgent lives, occupied with their own desires, ambitions and private objects. What the apostle brings before them as to resurrection was not merely to correct a doctrinal error, but to put them right in the centre of their moral being, to put the faith and light of resurrection in their souls, in order that they should live, not in view of this age, but in view of the coming age. It would transform the lives of the people of God if they had faith of resurrection.

Ques Would you say what there is to raise?

CAC Resurrection is presented in Scripture in a moral connection: that is to say, it is those who have done good who come forth to the resurrection unto life. They have so lived that, though they have gone down in death, it is impossible they should disappear. They must be raised for God's world; there was a moral beauty and excellence about them that must come up for God's world. We have been looking lately at the subject of incorruptibility. That which is morally incorruptible is suited to be clothed upon with incorruptibility, even as to bodily condition.

Ques Does the thought of resurrection refer to the body?

CAC It refers to saints viewed as having been buried, not as having gone to heaven; it is "all who are in the tombs". We may look at the saints in two entirely different connections. When a brother or sister has departed this life, we say, 'He (or she) is with the Lord; his spirit is with the Lord'. Then again we say we buried him. Sometimes we identify the person with his spirit and sometimes with his body. It was said of the Lord, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay"; it was His dead body, but it was the Lord. We read too that pious men buried Stephen, Acts 8: 2. The person is identified with his body; that is the key to the subject of resurrection. But there is another side of things; we are going to be clothed with our house from heaven; that comes down, not up.

The person, as identified with his body, is buried. But when you bury the body of a saint you bury something very wonderful, because you bury that which has been for years a temple of the Holy Spirit, a sanctified vessel, dedicated as a living sacrifice to God. When you bury a saint you sow a suitable seed for resurrection unto life, something has been identified with that body that is morally suitable for and indispensable to God's world; and if God did not bring it up again and give it a place in His world, there would be a divine element missing in that world. Think what a powerful effect the consideration of this would have on us in our daily lives. Resurrection comes in on the moral line, in connection with all that God can approve in the life of His saints here, all the beautiful spiritual elements that God must have for His world. God's grace produced them by divine teaching and formation, and such features have been brought about in the saints that they are worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from among the dead. We might well ask ourselves, Am I worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from among the dead? Nothing will go into that world but what is suitable, and my concern is that I should be acquiring now, and displaying morally, the qualities suitable to God's world, so that if I come to be buried there might be something sown so suitable to God that He must bring it up in resurrection for His world.

Ques What is the house from heaven?

CAC That I should connect with the condition of purpose. We were singing just now about the Father as the spring and source of blessing, and how His purpose has taken form in a glorified Man. God has His purpose before Him in a glorified Man; and in His world He is going to clothe His saints with the blessedness of it. Resurrection is connected with what God is gathering up here to put in His world, but purpose is connected with what God is going to bring out of heaven and put on His saints. That is His purpose. There are

these two lines; the moral line ends in resurrection, when all that has been wrought of God in His saints will be brought forth for His world.

It is inconceivable that what has been seen here in the saints who have lived during six thousand years, sorrowing, suffering, rejected and finally gone into the grave, should be lost! God is going to raise His saints and secure it all in resurrection for His world; it is too good for God to lose. Resurrection comes in on that line. We can understand the exercise of the apostle: he tells us in Philippians 3 how earnestly and untiringly he is seeking to arrive at the resurrection from among the dead.

Ques Did God give a testimony in those whose graves were opened?

CAC I think that was a testimony to the fact that the power of death was completely broken, and not only in Christ but in regard to saints. Wonderful things happened; the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom the moment Christ died — the course was clear for God to come out in the blessedness of His love to men. And as soon as Christ rose from the dead many of the saints who slept arose and went into the holy city and appeared to many. They were approved for God's world. The moment Christ arose it came to light that He had companions. Christ was approved for God's world; no one would have any difficulty about that. How could the preciousness seen in Christ be left in death! He could not be holden by death, it was all wanted for God's world. But the same thing in principle was seen in application to saints. I do not think they ever died again.

There was no proper setting forth of resurrection in Scripture until Christ rose. That God had the power to raise was seen in the damsel brought to life, and in the young man and in Lazarus; it was resurrection power that did it, but they were not brought into the resurrection state, or incorruptibility, then. It was properly resuscitation rather than resurrection; but if God could bring back a dead man into his life of flesh and blood, it was clear proof that He could set aside the power of death; the power of God was there.

The Old Testament saints had the faith of resurrection: we are told of some that they were tormented, afflicted, and how they died not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection.

Two things will eventually be brought together. What God effects by His grace in His saints, the moral fruits of His grace and working, are all suitable for His world. But there is something else — He is going to clothe His saints with the glory He has gathered up in a glorified Christ — that is on the line of His eternal purpose. He thought of that before ever sin came in. Resurrection

stands in reference to that condition of things where death had come in; if death had not come in there would be no need to talk of resurrection.

Ques What about Moses and Elias in the transfiguration?

CAC The two were conspicuous examples of men who were approved for God's world. It has often been said that Moses represents the dead — we know he died and God buried him, but he had to be raised for God's world. Elijah represents the changed saints. He did not pass through death but was changed, taken to heaven in a whirlwind.

God will infallibly fulfil His purpose and clothe His saints with glory. In this chapter we get the thought of what is sown and what is raised; and then the thought of the heavenly One and our bearing His image. There is a heavenly character in what God brings out in His people through His working in their souls which leads them to live in the light of His world.

Ques Would not that dispel all natural thoughts of resurrection?

CAC Yes, we should have in our minds the thought of moral features. People lose sight of that and think of meeting their relatives in heaven, but in the sphere of spiritual things it is a question of moral kindred and likeness; we shall recognise the brethren by what they are morally, not by their photographs.

Ques What came out in the Lord could not possibly remain in death; so should we desire to be on that line?

CAC Yes, that is it. If we have faith of resurrection it would transform our practical lives. We should not want to cherish or maintain a single feature that God could not secure for His world. If there is that about me which is not suitable for God's world, the sooner I drop it the better.

At the present time everything for God comes out in the bodies of the saints. The body of the saint is a vessel capable of being filled with divine light; one longs that the light should shine out.

Ques What is death swallowed up in victory?

CAC That is when every trace of the power of death has been removed, when saints are brought forth as invested with all that is glorious, death eternally annulled. Death is swallowed up — it is a remarkable word, "that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life", 2 Corinthians 5: 4. The apostle longed for that rather than for resurrection, "while yet we do not wish to be unclothed, but clothed, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life". The apostle had the most extraordinary sense of the blessedness of being here in

his body, and he did not want to be removed from the scene of testimony until the whole company should go together. He had an extraordinary sense of the glory and dignity of occupying a body here in which what is delightful to God and that has the fragrance of Christ could be exhibited.

Ques What is the thought of Christ being magnified in the body, whether by life or death?

CAC There (Philippians 1) Paul is saying he does not know which to choose; whether to depart or remain; the only thing before him is Christ being magnified. He had been moving about the country preaching Christ to magnify Christ. He was the minister of Christ wherever he went, a sweet odour of Christ, but now he is locked up in prison, and he says, 'I do not mind, the only thing I am set for is that Christ may be magnified. He was magnified when I was moving about preaching, and now when locked up in prison I desire that He should still be magnified'. Paul was living for God's world.

Ques Has the weakest saint an opportunity to display this?

CAC Yes, it is a wonderful thing to have a vessel you can hold in honour and sanctification for God. The most gifted man in the world has not more than his body, and we each have one too.

Ques What is the power of His resurrection?

CAC The apostle was set to reach the spot Christ had reached, and to reach it the same way Christ had gone. Christ had trodden a pathway of suffering and death, and it had led in the power of resurrection to His being placed in glory, approved of God for His world. Paul says, 'That is what I am after, I will go the same way'. The faith of resurrection puts you on the line of suffering and death instead of aiming at something high, honour and position in this world. We do not know much of this, but Paul did. I do not think the outward man in Paul perished in a natural way, but in the service of love. It was not merely that Paul was getting old, or the earthen vessel breaking up by inherent weaknesses, but his was a Christ-devoted life that caused even his body to bear the marks of the dying of the Lord Jesus. If you had stripped the clothes off Paul you would have seen the marks he bore in his body of his devotion to Christ in the service of love here. The dying of Jesus was seen in the evidence there: you could see how he had expended himself in the service of love; that is the life of Jesus, a life of suffering love that goes down to death here, but that claims resurrection as its divine answer. It would be impossible for God to leave the moral elements of such a life out of His world. Death worked in Paul but life in the saints. Could a man be scourged and not bear the marks?

Ques The Lord's visage was marred more than any man's; is that the same thought?

CAC Yes, I think there is nothing more touching than people should say, "Thou hast not yet fifty years". John 8: 57. That was said to One who was not much more than thirty years of age. His very Person carried the evidence of a suffering love that had never spared itself. That blessed One moved through this world at every step in the full light of God's world. Psalm 16 is the divine portrait of the life in which that blessed One walked through this world — His trust was in God; He was separate from the idolatrous world; He loved the saints. He said, "Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol, neither wilt thou allow thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt make known to me the path of life: thy countenance is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore". Psalm 16: 10, 11. He moved in a path that was morally bound to end in resurrection; it was a necessity. Who can say that is not the path for the saint?

Ques Is there a connection between His sufferings and what we read in Revelation 5: 6, "A Lamb standing, as slain"?

CAC I think the marks on the Lamb will be the sweetest and most affecting feature of His glory forever. He will never lose in the eyes of His saints the attractiveness of what He suffered in the service of His love — it must all come out in resurrection. Nothing in the Lord Jesus could be missed from God's world. He went into death, but all His excellence must be brought out of death. At the end of each gospel we find that God shows how the features that marked Him in the days of His flesh, the wonderful beauty, perfection and grace seen in Him, have been carried through into resurrection. It raises the question with me, 'How much is there about me that it is absolutely necessary that God should carry through into resurrection for His world?' To get that before us, and to keep it before us, would have a sound practical effect on our lives.

The apostle introduces in chapter 15 the thought of sowing. What is sown is only a bare grain, and God will give it a body as it pleases Him. Think of the saints as marked by the features of Christ — features coming out in sorrow, persecution and trial, until at last the saint dies and is buried. What have you sown? God has valued every feature of Christ that has come out in that saint. Sometimes we can tell the Lord with great pleasure, as we bury a saint, that we have seen imperishable features in that saint, features that it is not possible should be left out of God's world. Outwardly there is a sowing in corruption, dishonour and weakness, but the saint is going to be raised in power and glory and incorruptibility. God is going to give that seed a body as it

pleases Him. God is going to bring it up in all the splendour of His own appreciation of what came out in that body. God's system of glory is a very diversified one; there is every kind of glory in that system. We see everywhere, even in God's material universe, variety and diversity, some particular touch of glory about everything that God does. In a corresponding way we see some particular feature of glory about every saint. Saints are not duplicated; there is some distinctive feature of moral glory about every saint; it is all coming out for God's world. The glory that comes out in the saints now is the shining of the features of Christ, and that renders resurrection necessary; we ought to think more of it. It raises an exercise as to whether we are living and moving and thinking and feeling in the light and faith of resurrection. If we were we should not want to cultivate the natural but the spiritual, because the natural will not appear in God's world: those who appear there are the sons of God, the sons of resurrection. Let us cultivate the spiritual, and if we do even the natural will become the vehicle for the spiritual to come out, an opportunity for the will of God to be worked out so that there will be a moral element connected with the natural which God can treasure up for His world. I do not think you can bring out the features of Christ without overcoming the natural and carnal element that is opposed to them; every bit of victory for God means a conflict.

The power by which the saints live to God now is resurrection power; Romans 6 comes in there, the saints now live morally in resurrection power. They account themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, "We have been buried therefore with him by baptism unto death, in order that, even as Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life". A saint walks in newness of life by resurrection power; it is the same power by which God will eventually raise the dead. As long as we are here we are in mortal bodies and subject to corruption, but by and by we shall be placed in incorruptible conditions. It is necessary the saints should be raised because in the mind of God they all live to Him — "the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob", Luke 20: 37. The Sadducees might say, They have been dead hundreds of years, but God says, "I am the God ...", not 'I was'. They are living men for God. If they live for Him they must be raised, it is an absolute necessity. What had come out in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were necessary elements for God's world. There was the calling of God in Abraham, leading to the refusal of the world, the breaking away from his country and kindred and father's house. What a blessed feature for God's world! Isaac was the child of resurrection; in him we see resurrection power by which everything for God is truly brought forth. In Jacob we see the result of God's discipline. These three elements

make up the life of faith: the call of God, resurrection power, and the fruit of the discipline of God in practically setting aside the crooked perversities of the flesh. When that is all secured the saints are brought to the point of worship — Jacob ends as a worshipper. When we get such features in saints we have what is necessary for God's world, and He must raise it.

On the other hand God has His own eternal thoughts which have been His delight, treasured up in Christ before the foundation of the world. It was the greatest delight to God when Christ went back to Him in the condition of purpose; not as a risen Man only, but in the condition of purpose. That condition of man was before the heart of God before ever sin came into the universe. God has now that which was the delight of His purpose before the ages of time; He has it realised in His beloved Son as a risen and glorified Man; and He is going to clothe His saints with that.

There are the two lines: what God effects in the saints by His work, so that in result He raises them for His world; and that God brings down the glory of His eternal purpose, and clothes His saints with it for the satisfaction of His own love. It is beautiful to put the two together.

1 CORINTHIANS 15 (SECOND READING)

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Rem We were noticing that the apostle, at the commencement of the chapter, speaks of the gospel which he preached, and that it was according to Scripture. He mentions the great effects of the gospel and that they were all according to Scripture, and I suppose what follows in the chapter is what is involved in the gospel; it shows us what a wonderful thing it is and what is involved in it. It goes far beyond the need of man and introduces the thought of divine purpose.

CAC Yes, and death and resurrection are the way into divine purpose. Therefore Christ has gone that way. It is important for us to see the simple fact that the Lord's life here upon earth and His death and His resurrection are all on the way to the accomplishment of divine purpose in Him. The purpose of God does not actually come into view until Christ takes His place in heaven.

I suppose the thought of seed introduces the idea of purpose. Something is in view in the sowing of the seed which does not actually appear in the seed itself. It is bare grain; but everyone who sows seed has in view the complete, perfect result, the harvest; the idea is that God is going to perfect all that is in His own mind and resurrection is necessary for that. Nothing can put away sin but death, and nothing can annul death but resurrection; and resurrection is in view of our being quickened to live in an entirely new order of things which is according to divine purpose, something which was in the mind of God before ever He made man of dust.

I suppose the apostle brought all this truth before the Corinthians not merely to counteract the error that was found in the minds of some, but to develop spirituality, and I think spirituality really brings us on to the ground and into the line of divine purpose. A spiritual man would have before him what was in the mind and heart of God.

Ques "The second man, out of heaven" — just to what does that refer?

CAC It has been said, and I think it is right, that the second Man is the thought of pattern, and all that God has in view in the purpose of His love is patterned in the second Man, and He is out of heaven. That is, it does not exactly refer to what He was in the days of His flesh.

Ques What is exactly the difference between the two expressions, "last Adam" and "second man"?

CAC The last Adam is said to be “a quickening spirit” — life-giving Spirit. The first man was Adam: that is, we think of a person when we say, “the first man”, a person that died in the year 930 of the world’s history. That was the end of the first man. He was a living soul, but the last Adam is a life-giving Spirit. He is One who is able to quicken with His own life those who come under His headship, so that they are competent to live in the region of divine purpose. I think it is important to notice the difference between the bearing of resurrection and the bearing of quickening. I expect it has been noticed by all of us that when the two things are mentioned together they are mentioned in that order — resurrection first and then quickening, which intimates clearly that quickening has to do with a life that is beyond death. I have put it sometimes in this way: resurrection stands relative to all that is behind it, but quickening stands relative to all that is before it.

Ques Is quickening the power to live in the enjoyment of all that God has purposed?

CAC Yes; we are not quickened by the last Adam for this world, nor for things connected with this life, but we are quickened by the last Adam in order that we may live in that region of purpose; and everyone that is introduced to that region is going to be patterned after the second Man who is the heavenly One. Now resurrection is on the way to that. Resurrection is relative to all that is behind it. It is the mighty power of God coming in relative to all that has been occasioned by sin. Sin has come in by man, and death has come in by sin. Now God’s answer to all that is resurrection. It takes man completely out of all that he was in naturally; but that is in view of his being quickened so as to live in a new region, a heavenly region, and to live in that region as quickened by the last Adam and as patterned after the second Man.

This is not exactly a question of what is moral. The apostle is not occupied with the moral side here, but that as we have borne the image of the one out of the earth made of dust so we shall bear the image of the One out of heaven. It is a heavenly Christ who is the second Man.

Rem It is not Christ on earth.

CAC No, I do not think it refers to that. Of course, we know that personally everything that attaches to Christ was there essentially, but the setting of the second Man is that He is the heavenly One, and the purpose of God is portrayed in the heavenly One. We are not going to be like Christ as He was here. We are going to be like Christ as He is now in heaven.

Rem So that the perfect Man had to die.

CAC That is, to close up everything connected with the first man. Everything that came in by the first man had to be closed up in such a way as to be satisfactory to God, and it was closed up in the death of Christ; the resurrection of Christ is the way by which we enter into the sphere of the purpose of God. It was not in the purpose of God that we should be like Christ in the days of His flesh, but it was in the purpose of God that we should be like Him as the heavenly One.

Ques Would it be right to say that the Lord's being here was connected with the will of God, but the Lord in heaven is connected with the purpose of God?

CAC Yes, I think so. God had to be glorified in regard of all that had come in in connection with the man made of dust. He has been glorified, and in resurrection the Lord emerges from all the consequences of what came in by the man made of dust. He has been in death,

He has been in burial, because if He had not been buried the thing would not have been complete.

He removed every liability that had come upon the inheritance, and He has done it all in absolute perfection. So that nothing need be added to what has been done on that line. In the death and burial of Christ there is the entire end and removal of everything that was unsuitable to the purpose of God. It is good to look at it from that side, not simply as meeting need; it did meet need but it removed everything that was unsuitable to the purpose of God. That is true for every believer. It is not any special class; it is not some extra-special people who are going to be raised, though there are some who teach that now.

Ques Was not the Lord Jesus also the "bare grain"?

CAC Quite so, because all the purpose of God was inherent in Him. The potentiality of it all was there to be brought into fruition through death. He was the "grain of wheat" that fell into the ground and died to bear much fruit. It is all in view of the purpose of God.

Rem We have to make this distinction in regard of the Lord, that there was no question of corruption with Him.

CAC So that you could not say of the Lord that He was sown in corruption. That is very important to keep in mind. He saw no corruption, because corruption is the evidence that death has got the victory. God's Holy One saw no corruption.

Ques Do you distinguish between quickening and resurrection?

CAC Yes, very much so, because resurrection takes you out of all connected with the former history. Resurrection took Christ out of everything that was connected with the former history of man. He came into it in grace. He bore the sin; He entered into death; He took everything that had come in upon man made of dust, but in resurrection He emerges from it all. That is the resurrection side. It is emerging, just as in resurrection a man emerges from the grave; he leaves all that behind. Now what is going to happen to him? Well, he is going to be quickened. It is always in that order wherever you find resurrection and quickening together; resurrection comes first. You are brought out of the old, but now you are going to live in the new, and the last Adam has quickened everyone who stands in relation to Him; He has quickened them with the life of purpose.

Rem It is those who are raised that are quickened.

CAC Yes, they are raised and quickened so that they can live in the region of the purpose of God. Of course, all this is anticipated morally: we have come, through infinite grace, under the quickening power of the last Adam now in a moral sense, so that we can touch the region of purpose, and we can live in it. We can respond to God in fresh affection in the region of His own purpose. I suppose, in order to reach the purpose of God in an experimental way we have to learn death; that is, there is no other way in. That which is sown is not quickened unless it die. I believe there is a great moral principle in that: death is upon every single thing that I derive from the man who was made of dust, and if I am to live in a region where death is not I must learn death to that order. So that a moral learning of death is necessary if we are to live in the region of the purpose of God.

Ques Would you link this with the new covenant?

CAC Yes. I think the new covenant will really be brought into result on the principle of resurrection. As regards Israel, they are a valley of dry bones, and they are very dry! There is no remedy except in the power of resurrection and quickening; so that the new covenant will be entered into and enjoyed on the principle of life out of death. They will have to learn that death is upon them. I do not think that any person of Adam's race who has to do with God is excluded from learning that death is upon him, and in learning that lesson he acquires power to apprehend the wonderful fact that the last Adam quickens that we may live in a region outside of death altogether. The wonderful triumph of God! We may well say, "Thanks to God, who gives us the victory". He puts us in possession of the complete victory before we are actually in it; but Christ is in it, and it is far better for us that He should be in it.

Ques Were the Lord's movements in John 20 on the quickening line?

CAC I think so. That is the scripture which I should use to illustrate the thought of quickening, because He breathed into them. It was a wonderful thing to breathe into them. He imparted to them His own life and in that life they were rendered competent for the enjoyment of the privilege of association with Him, and they were also competent for testimony as sent by Him into the world.

Rem That was life out of death — the other side of death.

CAC Yes.

Ques Would you say that the whole of John's gospel leads up to that?

CAC It has it in view. I think that the work of God from new birth onward has the purpose of God in view. When man is born again there is the seed of divine purpose deposited there, and it has in view what God is going to do in the resurrection and heavenly world. In John's gospel that is particularly in view because it is to a large extent the gospel of purpose. It is not like Luke, the gospel of grace meeting man in all his need. John is the gospel of purpose and the two go on together; they are bound together. Paul speaks to Timothy of God having saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace, and the two things go together — "Purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time, but has been made manifest now by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings", 2 Timothy 1: 9, 10. That is very much what we get here: it is life and incorruptibility.

Ques You spoke of new birth and quickening. Are they the same thing?

CAC Oh no, not a bit of it! New birth has quickening in view. New birth is the initial work of God by which a man becomes sensitive Godward. I have compared it sometimes to the sensitising of a photographic plate. It undergoes a process which makes it sensitive to light. Now that is like new birth. A man that is born anew becomes sensitive to divine light so that it acts upon him and there is an element of moral cleanness introduced into the soul. That is all, you can say, on moral lines, but it has in view the purpose line. There are two great lines in Scripture: there is the moral line and the purpose line, and presently, of course, in resurrection they will both coalesce. There is the line on which God has worked with us morally, and there is another line on which we are looked at as subjects of purpose, and they both coalesce eventually.

Ques The order in John's gospel is born again, resurrection and quickening. Is that the moral order, the order in which they are understood?

CAC I think so. God always has His purpose in view, and I suppose Paul is leading the saints to contemplate what God has in purpose. He calls attention to the varied works of God which can be seen in nature — different seeds each having in view its own result, and different kinds of flesh, and different kinds of bodies. He is getting higher and higher to the heavenly bodies, all leading to the distinctiveness of what is connected with divine purpose, with what is connected with the last Adam and the second Man.

Rem The Corinthians appear to have spent a great deal of time on that which will go into death, but the apostle seems to emphasise that which is coming out of death.

CAC Yes, and it would make us all spiritual if we were just to recognise the importance of what is coming out of death. There are a great many things that are attractive, but they are going into death; but there is another order of things which is going to emerge from death, and we want to cultivate that.

Ques Has the reference to sowing any moral bearing on our exercises?

CAC I think it has. What is sown has a distinct relation to what is raised. To put it simply, we ought to feel, when we bury a saint, that we can say that we are sowing a seed which is suitable to spring up in resurrection to take its place in the world of purpose. That is, we look at the saint's body as identified with the presence of the Spirit and with all that has come out by the Spirit in that body. We bury the saint — Scripture always puts it that way: it never says we bury his body. "Pious men buried Stephen", Acts 8: 2. All that the man is is identified with his body. It was so with the Lord: the angel said to the women, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay", Matthew 28: 6. It is very wonderful. Now you think of that in relation to the burial of a saint. You think of all that has been identified with that body through the grace and work of God. That body has been the temple of the Holy Spirit; that body has been a member of Christ; is not that a seed suitable to spring up in the region of purpose? When we bury our brother or our sister we should have a sense of the dignity and value that attaches to that body. We ought to be able to say that we are sowing a seed that is suitable to be raised at the resurrection of the just.

Rem That is a very precious consideration — very precious!

CAC It is important that the work of God is identified with the body in which it was worked out, and that is really what gives value to resurrection. Certain elements have appeared and have been developed by the work of God in a saint and those elements are indispensable in God's eternal world. He must have them in His spiritual and imperishable universe. So that resurrection is an absolute necessity from God's stand-point.

Ques What have you to say about the treasure in earthen vessels?

CAC The idea is that we have the treasure in earthen vessels now. We have the treasure in vessels made of dust, but God is going to have the treasure in a vessel that is suitable. The jewel is going to be put in a casket worthy of it, to God's eternal praise.

Rem God is not going to lose any of the results of His work.

CAC I think that underlies this thought of the seed. The apostle introduces the thought of seed first in connection with the necessity of death and quickening; but then when he comes to speak of the burial of the saint he speaks of sowing. Well, we do not sow without some expectation of a crop, and the saints are going to be raised in the condition of purpose. How wonderful to take hold really of that! When you bury a saint you think of all that has come out morally in him. His body has been the temple of the Holy Spirit, and things have been worked out in that body that are morally of God; but that body is not in the condition of purpose, and never was so. I do not know anything more dignified than the burial of a saint. It is the most dignified moment in his history, because then you can say, 'Victory'. I would not say 'Victory' now. There may be, perhaps, a long chapter of defeat in front of me; but when the saints come to bury me they can say 'Victory' because everything connected with responsibility is ended, and the next time you see that saint whom you bury he will be in the condition of purpose. It is very fine!

Rem In conformity to His body of glory!

CAC Yes, "it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruptibility. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body". That is, it is all in the condition of purpose.

Ques Would you say that the apostle would have us to anticipate that in the Spirit?

CAC That is exactly what he had in mind in writing this, to carry them a step further than he had in chapter 11. It is all very well to go as far as chapter 11, but one should not stop there, because if the Lord convenes us in assembly by the Supper He sets us together in the presence of His having gone into death, and all that has been secured on the line of the will of God and the covenant; but the will of God and the covenant both have in view the purpose of God. So that after the breaking of bread, and after we have enjoyed together the blessed communion connected with the accomplished will of God and the covenant, I believe the Lord's intention is that we should pass on into the region of purpose; and if Christ gets His place as Head in our midst He comes

there in relation to purpose. If Christ takes His place as Head — He is the last Adam and He is the quickening Spirit — He would give us the consciousness of living with Him as quickened by Him, and living in the region of purpose.

We reach it spiritually. We are still in flesh and blood condition but we can touch it spiritually. All that the apostle speaks of here in connection with the last Adam and the second Man, the heavenly One, can be touched spiritually now, and I believe it is touched in the assembly when conditions are suitable for it. Paul could not develop this as teaching in connection with the assembly because the Corinthians were unspiritual; they were carnal and there was such gross disorder and such very diminutive stature that he could not develop the thought of purpose in relation to them; but in chapter 15 he brings it all out in connection with resurrection. So you can understand that he begins the next chapter by a reference to the first day of the week which is a purely spiritual reference.

Rem Your numerous references to purpose stir up our hearts to know more of what purpose involves.

CAC Well, it says, "Some are ignorant of God: I speak to you as a matter of shame". Now that ignorance of God is relative to purpose; so that these unhappy and misguided men who were saying that there was no resurrection of the dead were entirely ignorant of God in relation to His purpose. We do not really know God until we know His purpose. The nature of God, the wisdom of God and the glory of God all come out when you see His purpose, when you see how entirely He has cleared the scene of everything that came in by the man made of dust, and has established a new scene in connection with the last Adam and the second Man, where all is heavenly and where there is not a single thing about it that does not answer to the expectation of God to the fullest extent. I think it is very important that we should learn to think of things on the line of purpose.

Rem That would help us to "be firm, immovable, abounding always in the work of the Lord".

CAC And it teaches you to look at the saints in the light of the calling. I do not know anything more important in a practical sense than that we should look at each other in the light of the calling, because there is no imperfection in the calling, and the calling is according to purpose. Now when you think of a brother or sister you may see blemishes and defects, and we can all see them in each other when we get on that line, but if you think of the saints on the line of calling — and I would say without hesitation that the greatest thing you can say of any saint is that he is one of God's called ones, because everything is bound up in that — what a wonderful company it is! You feel that the

greatest honour that God could confer upon you is to allow you to sit down with a few people whom He has called according to purpose. It is fine! There is nothing small about that! You begin to realise that they are a great people — “Thy people ... a great people”, 1 Kings 3: 8. It is not as though you were thinking of the saints in an untrue way. The greatest reality possible about us is that we are called ones; so that when you can discern evidence of a work of God in a soul, however initial or small it may be, you feel yourself entitled to conclude that he is a called one; and it is, “Whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son ... But whom he has predestinated, these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified”, Romans 8: 29 - 30. He is obliged to wipe out everything connected with the guilty history — “but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified”. It is a golden chain stretched across time into eternity and no power of earth or hell could ever break the links in that chain. When you think of the brethren in that light you think truly of them. You may look at me and see all sorts of things, but what about the calling? What gives me value, if I am any value at all, is the calling. So Paul says, “For consider your calling, brethren” 1 Corinthians 1: 26. Just look around and see these poor, simple, weak things, people of no account in this world — oh, but they are called! They are called! What dignity! It is all going to issue in that wonderful scene where everyone will bear the image of the heavenly One.

TEMPLE CHARACTER

1 Corinthians 6: 19, 20; 1 Corinthians 3: 16, 17; 2 Corinthians 6: 14 - 18; Ephesians 2: 19 - 22

CAC I thought it might be profitable if we looked at the scriptures that refer to the saints in temple character. The fact that the saints have temple character is a very important and prominent part of the truth, and it is intended to have a very elevating and sanctifying effect. The temple thought is presented in three ways in the scriptures that have been read. It is looked at in an individual aspect, in a local aspect and in a universal aspect. God would use this truth to elevate us, so that we should regard ourselves and the assembly in a very holy light. God's way to deliver us from what is unworthy of Himself is not only by pointing out that it is wrong, but by giving us an enlarged conception of what is in His own mind. The Corinthians were in danger of falling into practices which were of the most degrading character morally, but the way of divine wisdom to deliver them was to call their attention to the holy and exalted character that attached to them; every one of them had a body which was a temple.

WP Is that true of every believer?

CAC It is true of every one who has received of God His Holy Spirit. Paul calls upon the saints at Corinth to recognise it. They had not recognised it. It is one thing to have the Spirit, and quite another thing to recognise the presence of the Spirit, and the holy character of the vessel in which the Spirit is, that is, the body of the believer.

Each of our bodies is a temple, a shrine. So that the body of the saint has a very holy character. It is not to be regarded as for common or unclean use.

JHF What is the difference between what you are speaking of and scriptures in Ephesians, "after that ye believed, ye were sealed" Ephesians 1: 13?

CAC Well, that shews how the gentiles got the Spirit. When they heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, they were sealed. If people receive the gospel, God bears witness to them by giving them His Spirit. God is very pleased with those who receive His precious gospel; they become so valuable in His sight that He puts the seal of His Spirit in them. But here in 1 Corinthians 6 it is a question of being purchased. In the epistle to the Romans the believer's body is looked at as being at his own disposal. We have all noticed that our body, according to Romans, is at our own disposal, and God brings wonderful motives to bear upon us, that we may render the reasonable service of presenting our bodies to Him. "I beseech you therefore, brethren,

by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service". Romans 12: 1. Your body from that point of view is at your own disposal. One would like to ask every young believer here, 'What have you done with your body? Has it really been presented to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable?' The point of view in Romans is that God's precious grace in Christ and His compassions have so affected us that we are glad to take up the privilege of presenting our bodies to God. He loves that we should do so, and allows us the privilege of doing it.

But He does not put it in that light in the scripture that we read in 1 Corinthians 6. He says, as it were, the body is not at your disposal at all; it is a purchased thing, and belongs wholly to the purchaser. We are bought with a price and that includes the body. It has been purchased, and the One who purchased it, purchased it for a holy use. He purchased it to make it a temple.

SJP What do we understand by a "temple"?

CAC It speaks of that which stands in immediate relation to God, and which has holy character, and we should behave wonderfully as individuals if we were governed by the thought that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. He bought us that He might give us His Spirit. That was His object in buying us, and we have no option in the matter.

JB The Lord used the word temple of His own body.

CAC Yes, that is a wonderful thing. We can see in the case of the Lord how holy the temple was. There was no defilement there, all was suitable to God. But then, through redemption, God has brought about for His own pleasure, that these bodies should be temples of the Holy Spirit. Then we should be very careful where we take them, and what we do with our hands and feet, and our lips; our bodies are temples.

TP Why do we get the difference you refer to between Romans and Corinthians? Is the thought of being set in connection with others in contrast to what is individual in Romans?

CAC Corinthians has in view the local assembly, but the basis of things lies in the individual aspect of things. The bodies of the saints are referred to here in remarkable ways; we are told that the body is "for the Lord". It is a question here of the rights of God and the rights of the Lord acquired through purchase. We have to own the right that has been acquired, so that our bodies are not to be for our own will and pleasure but are to be for the Lord. That is the character of the body of every believer. And then He says, "Your bodies are members of Christ".

Think of that! He says, "Shall I then, taking the members of the Christ, make them members of a harlot?" If I take my body for any unholy use, I am really stealing what belongs to Christ, and it is sacrilege. We get careless about things sometimes, but it is really sacrilege to use our bodies in any way but what is holy. It is a great thing to see the immense value that God attaches even to our bodies.

WP Is that how the saints are looked at, as holy?

CAC Yes, surely. So that we have only got one thing to do with these bodies, that is, to glorify God in them. They do not belong to us, they belong to God by purchase; we were purchased for a holy purpose, that God might have a number of shrines, in the midst of an impure and unholy world, where His Spirit is. How elevating it is! It is one of the most practical and sanctifying realities of Scripture.

WP We should be very careful, should we not, what we do with any member of our body?

CAC I think so; remembering that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit would give a holy dignity to the saints. From that standpoint nothing would be common that a saint has to touch. His body, his hands, his feet, his lips, or any member of his body, have temple character. It puts a holy touch upon every detail in practical life.

JHF In saying this was he not striking at the root of all the trouble in Corinth?

CAC Yes; and he brings in, you might say, the highest thoughts to correct the most debased thoughts, and that is worthy of God. He corrects the very lowest moral degradation by calling attention to the highest conception that He could bring before us. He elevates us thus, right above our natural level, above the level of all that we are as men and women living in this world. "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit".

We can see how such individuals would provide suitable material for the local assembly. The local assembly is the assembly of God; it is not simply a company of believers; it is that surely, but it is the assembly of God, and therefore everything in it must be suitable to God. In the third chapter Paul calls attention to the collective character which they had locally. They were collectively "temple of God"; they had that character for the Spirit of God dwelt in them. This is brought out in its bearing on what we introduce to the assembly locally. We all introduce something; we cannot stand in relation to the local assembly without introducing something. Now, what kind of elements are we introducing to the local assembly? Are we bringing in such things as wood and grass and straw? Or are we bringing in gold and silver and precious

stones? A great responsibility rests upon us, brothers and sisters, young as well as old, that we only bring in that which will adorn the temple. Wood, grass and straw may be very useful things in their place, but they would be no adornment to a temple! Gold and precious stones were in Solomon's temple; all the things were precious and the temple was adorned; it was not a bare structure. We must not think of the assembly as a bare structure; it is to be adorned, and every one of us is responsible for the adornment of the temple. We read that Solomon overlaid the house with precious stones for beauty (2 Chronicles 3: 6); it was adorned. The thought of the temple is introduced collectively in this chapter to put us on the line of adorning the local company where we are with things that have value in the sight of God. The youngest brother or sister can bring something of that character to adorn the temple.

FW Is not that very important, that we all bring something?

CAC Yes; the adornments of the temple are all of spiritual character, and the youngest of us can bring spiritual elements; and if we are consistent with the truth that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit we shall bring something of a spiritual nature to the assembly. We shall not bring in the worldly or the natural or the fleshly in any form; we shall bring spiritual elements. I think the Lord would greatly encourage the youngest of us to be exercised about adorning the temple in its local character.

SJP Peter speaks of the adornment of a meek and quiet spirit.

CAC That gives the idea of ornamentation. The disciples pointed out the temple to the Lord, that it was adorned with goodly stones and consecrated offerings; it was an adorned structure. Now the Lord would have us think of the local assembly in that character, and to remember that when we come to the meetings we are either bringing wood, grass or straw, or gold and silver and precious stones. We are either bringing something to detract from the adornment or something that will add to it. It is very exercising. I do not suppose any of us would be guilty of corrupting the temple of God. That is another thing. "If any one corrupt the temple of God, him shall God destroy". That is a man who deliberately seeks to falsify the holy character of the temple. He is a teacher of some evil doctrine which is contrary to the character of the temple altogether. I do not suppose there is anyone here who would dare to think of doing that; but then, we may bring wood, grass and straw!

JHF Would you say that it is not so much activity here but what we are?

CAC Well, I think it refers to believers as responsible builders, but while it would apply in a special way to those who teach and who take part in the meetings, it applies in principle to every brother and sister. What are we

bringing? Is it a detraction from the holiness and glory of the temple or is it some addition to it? The youngest believer is privileged to bring some addition. We are all responsible to bring what will correspond with the foundation, and what will adorn the shrine.

Ques Would it be that if we have not regarded our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, and not walked quietly and meekly during the week, when we come together we shall not really contribute?

CAC Well, I think that is so. If I have been using my body for my own pleasure in the week, I could hardly expect to bring gold and silver and precious stones; I have not been where these things could be found. If I have been finding a good part of my pleasure in reading what was connected with the world, I shall not find gold or silver or precious stones there; I shall gather up plenty of wood and grass and straw. I cannot come from the atmosphere of the world, and from the conditions that belong to natural human life, and bring anything that is of value with God. It is the young believer who has been in prayer, and who has been looking into the word, and asking God to give him more precious thoughts of Christ, and a better knowledge of Himself, who has the secret exercises that furnish one with gold and silver and precious stones. Precious things are gathered up from the secret exercises of the private life. So that the assembly is *adorned* — the temple is *adorned* — when you come there. If a young believer carefully and prayerfully reads the word every day when leisure time comes, and waits on God in prayer, and cultivates links with the brethren, the result will be an acquisition of gold and silver and precious stones, so that when he comes on the Lord's day morning, or to the prayer meeting or the reading, there is something in his heart that is of value to God. And that enriches the assembly, and adorns the temple; it is beautiful to be on that line.

This is all intensely practical and real. These are the greatest realities that subsist at the present moment; we need to get rid of all common religious notions and to get into the precious reality of the thoughts of God. You may depend upon it, it means profound satisfaction and joy for every one of us, and it means glory to God in our individual course, and glory to God in the adorning of the assembly, as having temple character. There is plenty of room for adorning.

Ques And would this come out in the spirit of a sister as much as in a brother?

CAC I wish we could get hold of the fact that the assembly is formed of the material that is there. It is material. Suppose a man prays a beautiful prayer just because he has learned how to express himself readily, and has got some

knowledge of the Scriptures, there is no adorning in that. The adorning comes out in the substance of things in a man's heart, so that there is substance and real value in it. Those who take part in the meetings should be much exercised; I think I can say I am exercised myself that what one says and does in the meetings should have true spiritual value. Not simply that we are saying words, but that the words express substance in our souls; we have gold and silver and precious stones; there is something substantial and valuable that can become adornment for the temple.

The temple in its greatest character exists today. There is a greater significance about the temple today than there was in Solomon's temple, and more significance than there will be in the day of millennial glory; and we should cherish the thought of the assembly as having that character. In the world there is no place for God or Christ, but there is a sphere where there is place for nothing else. I have thought of a word in Psalm 29: 9; it says, "In his temple doth every one say, Glory!". There is a great thought in that. If the local assembly is the temple, if it has temple character in my heart, I shall come to it to say, Glory! I should say that was a bit of gold. I believe God would delight to give us immunity from what is low or base by clothing us with glory, so that even the youngest believer might come to the meetings bringing glory. Every bit of the knowledge of God that I have is surely glory; all that I know of Christ is glory; and the Spirit is the Spirit of glory, and we come to the assembly — the temple — to say, Glory! That is to say, no one introduces there a low or mean thought, every one brings glory, whether he opens his mouth or not. This is for sisters also; we all come to say, Glory! We come to a spot marked by holiness — a spot altogether outside the whole sphere of human thoughts. The idea of the temple was brought in, I have no doubt, to the Corinthians to shut out of their minds every human thought. God would give us such a sense of the character of the temple that there might be nothing present to our hearts but the consciousness of glory. That is the true character of the local assembly. You may see it externally as a very feeble kind of thing, but the true character of it is glory. And you come in as a contributor; you come in saying, Glory! Any brother taking part has to be very careful that he does not introduce an element that is not marked by glory. Exercises as to this would elevate us.

We are not set to manufacture gold or silver or precious stones, or glory; they are all conferred. They wait upon us. The ministry of grace confers everything that is precious and valuable, and if we open our hearts to take it in we shall be furnished so that we can bring adornment to the local company. This results in a character of things being maintained that is suitable to God, and in which He finds pleasure, but this demands separation.

The verses we read in 2 Corinthians 6 shew that to be the temple of the living God demands separation from the idolatrous world and from what is unclean. It is in the light of the truth of the temple that we take up a position of intelligent separation. We begin to look at things from the light of what suits the temple. There is nothing in common between the temple of God and idols, and we cease to talk about whether there is any harm in this or that, we begin to think of things in relation to the temple, and of what suits the temple. That is how true separation comes about. We take up the place of separation in view of enlargement. That is the idea. Paul calls upon the Corinthians to be enlarged, and he shews them that the way to enlargement was to come into separation from everything that was not suitable to the temple of the living God. We cannot keep up links of friendship with people who are of the world, and we cannot keep up unrestrained links even with natural relations who are of the world, without sacrificing something of what belongs to the temple. The true principle of separation is that we cannot afford to be entangled with unsuitable things; we really cannot afford it; we are connected with such a glorious system of things that we cannot afford to be crippled by maintaining associations that are not in keeping with it. We begin to see that things are worthless that are highly esteemed amongst men; we look down upon them as feeling how unworthy they are of the temple of the living God. I think the light of the temple would greatly help us.

And then we get the universal thought in Ephesians 2. All the building is fitted together, and it increases to a holy temple in the Lord. The effect of being right individually — being governed by the light of the temple as to our own bodies — adjusts us and prepares us to come into the assembly, the local company, with a sense of its temple character. It is holy. Nothing is suitable there but what is morally glorious. And there we learn to look out and take account of things universally. Paul's thought for the Corinthians was enlargement, and as we are enlarged, we come to think of the assembly in its universal character, and to see that it is increasing to a holy temple in the Lord. Things have not reached finality. The temple character is to be constantly increasing and it is being added to in every part of the world. Every contribution of glory that is found in the local assembly contributes to the universal glory; it contributes to the temple character of the whole assembly upon earth; there is an additional accession of light as to the mind of God. If we get a little accession of light as to the mind of God here in this place, that is intended to contribute to the divine light that fills the universal temple.

It is very exercising to think that we are just at the end of the assembly period. If God's thoughts are to reach fulness and finality as held spiritually in the assembly, there is a great deal to be quickly done. "In whom all the

building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord" suggests to me that God intends to develop the temple thought in its completeness before He takes the assembly to heaven. All the ministry that is going on, and the fellowship that we enjoy locally, all spiritual activities in the assembly, each one bringing some element of glory to it, are all in view of the completion of God's thought as to the truth of the temple. It is in the Lord, shewing that it applies to the present time. Things will not be "in the Lord" in heaven; it is down here that God is working out this great universal design, and we can all contribute to what God has in mind. Solomon's temple was seven years in building, and I believe, if we may apply it in that way, we have got very near the end of the seven years! The last bit, so to speak, of the structure and adornment will soon be added now. What a wonderful dignity it puts upon us, that we can be in line with these great and holy thoughts of God, and really contribute to the completion of the divine thought. So that there should be that upon this earth before the Lord comes which has come to the full measure of the glory and intelligence that belongs to the temple. I think that is something for us to pray about.

One would expect great expansion in the closing period of the assembly's history here.

The temple was next to the oracle in Solomon's temple. The holy of holies is called the oracle, and then the temple comes next to it, for we are told that the temple was before the oracle. The full mind of God is in the oracle, as known in Christ, and the temple comes next to it. In the temple there is, so to speak, immediate nearness to every thought that is in the mind of God. And then the house takes character from the temple. The house is a wider thought. It covers the whole edifice where God dwells. So we read of "the temple of the house" (1 Kings 6: 3) shewing that the temple is more inward. The whole mind of God is in "the oracle". Then the temple is before it as the place where the Holy Spirit can give light. Then the house is governed by the light that is in the temple. If we are not right in temple character we shall not be right in house character. We come in that way from the temple to the house. The house is more public — a place of right behaviour and of God's activities, the pillar and base of the truth. But the temple is the internal thing, where priests go, and where all takes character from the oracle.

The house is more general and public, but the temple idea is more the secret of what is in the mind of God; it is where everything that has the character of mystery is understood and entered into. I am sure these thoughts are worth praying over in secret with the Lord, so that the great conception of the temple might be more definitely before us.

JHF I should like to ask, how do you connect Ephesians 2: 7, 8 with what you have been saying?

CAC Well, they bring out the wonderful place that the saints have as quickened with the Christ and raised up together and made to sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. God has elevated the saints to a majestic height of blessing, and He has done it with a view to what He will display in the ages to come. He will display the surpassing riches of His grace in that way. But at the end of the chapter we get the present time. What is brought about at the present time is that the saints, after being elevated to the supreme height of God's thoughts of blessing in the heavenlies, come down, as it were, to take up the place down here of fellow citizens, and of the household of God, and the holy temple, and the habitation of God in the Spirit. It is the dignity of the place that we can have down here; as having known the liberty of heaven we can come down and take up this exceedingly dignified position down here. So that in every little place where the saints are gathering in the light of the assembly there can be something more elevated and more glorious than anything that can be found in the religious world. And we are all privileged to have part in it, to be spiritual contributors.

WP Is that promise, "I will be to you for a Father" an additional promise?

CAC It is a great encouragement to move on the line of separation. Some might feel, if we separate, we shall suffer. But He says, If you take up the place of separation I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters; you will come into a place where I will take care of you, and that is better than being on friendly terms with the world.

INCORRUPTIBLE AFFECTIONS

1 Corinthians 11: 23 - 26; John 14: 15 - 18; Ephesians 6: 23, 24

The exercise I have had in view of our coming together was that there should be something to promote spiritual affections — something that would lead to enlarged ability to love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption. “Them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption” is a beautiful description of the saints. It comes in the closing verses of the epistle which gives the full height of our calling, and it seems to suggest that everything is open to us if we love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption. One feels encouraged to believe that the Lord is working at the present time to bring that about.

We shall not get incorruptibility as to our bodily condition until we are translated, but I believe the Lord is active in the meantime to bring about incorruption in our affections. We could not say of any natural affection — even the sweetest — that it was in incorruption. But there are spiritual affections which have the Lord Jesus Christ as their Object, and which can be said to be “in incorruption”. They are of an undecaying and imperishable order. The word “sincerity” in the Authorised Version does not give the force of it; it is “in incorruption”. To have such affections would prepare us for the rapture in a blessed way. Those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption are ready at any moment to be caught up to meet Him in the air.

It is blessed to see that what is incorruptible has begun to have place in the saints now. Peter tells us that we are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the living and abiding word of God”. That is how our spiritual history began. Peter speaks, too, of “the hidden man of the heart” having “the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit”. Incorruptibility having place in the hidden man of the heart would shew incorruption in the affections. I would like to suggest how that character of affection is brought about and maintained in the saints. I have no doubt it is by learning a love which is in incorruption, made known to us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and by appropriating that love in our affections. That is why I suggested reading the scripture in 1 Corinthians 11. I believe the Lord instituted the Supper to maintain us in relation to Himself in incorruptible affections. He brings us under the influence of a love that is in itself incorruptible.

The first thing the Lord says in instituting the Supper is, “This is my body, which is for you”. That body was prepared of God to be suitable to His “gracious” and “Holy” One; nothing ever had place in that body but the will of God. There was incorruption there, from the outset and all through. The Lord would nourish our affections on the fact that His body has been devoted to us

in love. We know that He has wrought atonement for us and accomplished redemption. What He has done for us is most blessed, and we could have no spiritual blessing without it, but what He suggests to us in the Supper is His infinite devotion to us in love, and that becomes the spring of affections which can be said to be "in incorruption".

I doubt whether we think sufficiently of the delight the Lord had in taking up His body — in being here in the scene of lawlessness for the pleasure of God. He said, "I delight to do thy will". He delighted to be in that body which God prepared for Him. The Son's affections were in that body, giving impulse to every act of obedience and righteousness. That was true when He was here; He had ever the consciousness of doing the will of One who sent Him. There was no stain upon the perfection that was there — no decline or decay. All His perfections and His holy affections came out in His body. It was the pure vessel in which everything that was marked by incorruption came out.

The bride in the Song of Songs (chapter 5) describes His body; she speaks of His head, locks, eyes, cheeks, lips, hands, legs and feet. In Psalm 45 the psalmist's heart is welling forth with a good matter; he speaks of the King's sword, His arrows, His throne, His sceptre, His garments and His anointing. All that suggests what He is officially. But His official glory does not appear in chapter 5 of the Song of Songs; what we see there is the description of His personal loveliness as known to His beloved ones. The Spirit of God would call attention to the fact that it came out in His body. We need to entertain that, and think of all the personal loveliness of that blessed One who took up a prepared body for the pleasure of God. "I was daily His delight" was true of every step of His pathway here, and His delight was to be God's delight. Everything in that body had perfect loveliness and moral beauty, and the spring of all was the affections of the Son. Think of that body being devoted in love to the assembly! It is not a question at the Supper of sinners, but of the Lord devoting His body for the assembly. All were clean at that supper table save the apostate, and the Lord said, 'I am going to devote My body for you'. That was love in incorruption. The loved one in the Song had Him in her affections through the night of His absence as "a bundle of myrrh", Song of Songs 1: 13. She had to get to the mountain of myrrh "until the day dawn, and the shadows flee away" (chapter 4:6). Speaking in the language of the New Testament she had to learn Him in the devotion of His suffering love in which He gave His body for her. All moral loveliness came out in His body — He was "altogether lovely" — but He has devoted that body in supreme love for the assembly. That is the "mountain of myrrh"; there is fragrance there which moves the affections. Unfading and incorruptible love on His part calls into activity incorruptible affections on the part of the assembly.

In Luke 22 His body is "given", but in 1 Corinthians 11 the word "given" is omitted. "This my body, which is for you". The abiding preciousness of what was once given remains — I think we might say eternally — for the assembly. The fragrance of that "mountain of myrrh" is wafted to us afresh every time we hear Him say from heaven, "This do in remembrance of me". The voice of our Beloved surely makes every chord in our hearts vibrate with incorruptible affections! The Supper is the Lord's abiding provision that precious, incorruptible affections should be constantly refreshed, revived and maintained in our hearts, and this not merely individually — for we cannot eat the Supper alone — but assembly-wise.

There is a difference between having an affectionate remembrance of the Lord all the week and remembering Him collectively as come together in assembly. Every one who loves Him in incorruption carries a sense of His love all the time. But His precious word, "This do in remembrance of me", is addressed to His own collectively; it contemplates movements of affection which have assembly character. He would be remembered in united affections by His loved ones as together in assembly character. He would be remembered in affections which are properly those of *the assembly*. I believe the Lord intends to develop this kind of affection every time we remember Him. If we have only broken bread a few times our affections may not be greatly developed, but those of us who have broken bread many times ought to be greatly developed in these affections. If not, what the Lord has before Him has not been reached, and we are in poor response to Him; we are like the little sister with no breasts (Song of Songs 8: 8). Nothing makes up for that; no turret of silver or boards of cedar will make up for lack of breasts. The Lord wants the incorruptible affections of the assembly. The bride says, "*My breasts like towers*"

(Song of Songs 8: 10); those are fully developed affections; they are brought about under the influence of the devoted love of Christ as set before us in the Lord's supper. John at that supper table was in the region of incorruptible affections; he was in the bosom of Jesus, and leaned on His breast. That is where we learn incorruptible affections, and where they are developed in us.

The Lord would also be remembered in the drinking of the cup. What an astonishing thing it would have been to a Jew to be told that the new covenant was a subsisting fact! He would say, 'Nothing is changed; sin and death are still all around'. But the Lord says, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood". The spirit and spring of the new covenant is God revealed in His nature. You might say to a man living in the millennium, 'What wonderful times you are having, what marvellous prosperity! Your harvest and your

vintage are perfect; neither your wife nor your children are ever sick; you have a blessed time'. He would answer, 'If that is all you know about it, you do not know much. *My* blessedness is that I know God'. "They shall all know me". That is the blessedness of the covenant. Not merely that everything is perfect providentially, but all His people know God, and respond to Him in holy affections. It is not only that lawlessness and idolatry are set aside, and there is no dearth or death-shadow, but God is known in love. We have this blessed knowledge now, and we call the Lord to mind as the One who has been the Testator of it all. It has been brought to us in the blood of Christ so that we may know God.

Could anyone tell how God valued the life of Christ here?

But He gave Him in death that we might know the Spring of all blessing in the heart of God. To drink into that forms incorruptible affections.

In the Supper we hear the Lord's voice — "the voice of my beloved!" And we get a glimpse of Him; He shews Himself through the lattice. He appeals to the affections of His saints, and the affections of the assembly move actively towards Him. What He presents to us in the Supper speaks of His affections, but He brings them before us to awaken ours. His coming to us is dependent on our affections. The first question is, How have we been affected by the love of Christ and the love of God which has been brought to us, and which is kept fresh in our affections by the continual recurrence every first day of the week of the Lord's supper? As we call Him to mind in affectionate remembrance He gets His place, though absent, as the Object of love "in incorruption".

The love of the assembly is actively awakened by what is recalled of our Lord Jesus Christ. Incorruptible affections are nourished and cherished and enlarged under the influence of His love and God's love. Then our affections have an effect on Him. "Behold, He cometh", Song of Songs 2: 8. "If ye love me ... I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you", John 14: 15, 18. If we love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption do you think He could keep away from us?

He goes where He is loved. From John 14: 15 all turns on "If ye love me". It is not, "I have loved you"; He has said that in John 13, but now He says, "If ye love me".

He says as it were, I will tell you the great gain which accrues to those who love Me in incorruption. First of all you will get the Spirit — the Comforter — and then "I am coming to you". How deeply the Lord is affected, and how truly He is attracted, by the love of the assembly!

We can speak very confidently about His love for the assembly, but in John 14: 15 it is the assembly's love for Him, and how He answers to it. The development of incorruptible affections in the saints attracts Him. In the Song of Songs He says to His loved one, "How much better is thy love than wine!" She had said, "Thy love is better than wine", but He says, "How much better is thy love than wine!"

There is something collective for the Lord even in this day of great weakness. The Supper has been restored to us, and this really involves the reinstatement of an assembly character of things brought about by revived spiritual affections. If saints really eat the Lord's supper they must take church character. There is something for the heart of Christ; He not only loves the assembly, but the assembly loves Him.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter". The Comforter — the Holy Spirit — comes to be the abiding support of those who love our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is by His presence and power — though He is invisible — that spiritual affections are maintained here "in incorruption". If we give place to the Spirit our affections will never wane. While the Lord was here He carried on an unceasing service of personal love, but now that He has gone to the Father we have the Comforter. There is adequate divine power to maintain things wholly apart from any corrupting influence. This is not a fluctuating influence, but an abiding divine presence.

Another thought seems to me to be closely connected with the incorruptible affections which have been called into being by the activities of sovereign love, and that is suggested by the character in which the Lord comes to His own. "I will not leave you orphans". There is something of a parental thought in this. He would come as the One whose parental care and affections they had known.

He had nurtured them in family affections; He had spoken to them of the Father; He was Himself the way to the Father; and they had seen the Father in Him; He had told them of the Father's house. He would come to those who love Him to renew those blessed influences that would bring the Father and the Father's love near to them. He comes to us as the One who says, "I ascend to my Father and your Father".

The effect of His coming to His own is to bring in the consciousness of relationship with the Father. This is more than the light of the relationship, or even the Spirit of sonship; it is the enjoyment of the relationship in company with Him who is the firstborn among many brethren. There can be no orphan feeling left in the hearts that have experience of this.

How delightful it must be to the Father to have sons before Him in association with Christ — to have those whose affections are at home in the relationship which His love has established! Family affections are there, and they are in incorruption, they are eternal in their nature; they will never decay or fade. The love of Christ is known and responded to, the love of God is known and responded to, and the love of the Father is known and responded to. The Father's love is known as resting upon His beloved Son, but it is in the brethren to whom the Father's name has been made known by the Son. These are incorruptible affections.

If the Son comes to us He brings the Father's love because it rests on Him. It is the supreme desire of His heart that we should know the Father's love. "I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known; that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them", John 17: 26. What must it have been to the disciples to miss the abiding influence of the Father as He had been made known to them by the Son in Manhood? They are truly orphaned in losing Him, but "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you". He would come bringing the wealth and warmth of the Father's love to them. When He comes to us we find ourselves consciously with Him in the presence of the Father's love; we know that He is there. We may sometimes carry on meetings as if we were in the joy of this when we are not. One would desire to look increasingly for the realisation of it by the Lord coming to us — the state of our affections being suitable for Him to do so. It is love in incorruption that secures this unspeakable favour.

It is a day of much precious ministry, but let us not be content with light and terms. Nothing will satisfy our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father but developed affections — those incorruptible affections which are spiritual and eternal. Love in incorruption must be entirely spiritual. One is attracted by the blessedness of knowing that we can have what is incorruptible in our affections before we know incorruptibility in a glorified condition of body.

"In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you". He is in the Father's affections; the saints are in His affections; and He is in theirs. That verse is a precious setting forth of incorruptible affections.

THE HOLY DIGNITY AND SPIRITUAL WEALTH OF BELIEVERS (ADDRESS)

1 Corinthians 1:1-8; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Paul wrote this first letter to the Corinthian believers in great exercise of soul. He says, "out of much tribulation and distress of heart I wrote to you, with many tears", 2 Corinthians 2: 4. Why was this? It was because they had dropped down into a low carnal state, which was evidenced by many signs of spiritual disorder. God's object in leading the apostle to write this letter was to put a mighty lever under their hearts to lift them up to their true level as saints.

I think it would be pretty generally admitted by all christians that we are not in a very bright spiritual state. I am sure most of the believers in this city would admit that they are not so bright in soul as they might be, or would, perhaps, like to be. We do not know much about being filled with all joy and peace in believing, and abounding in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. This being so, a question of great importance arises. How can we be lifted up from our low state? This epistle, in great measure, supplies the answer.

It is very beautiful to see how the Holy Spirit goes to work to correct a low state. He does not begin to lash them right and left, or to say, 'You ought to do this or that', or 'You should be so and so'. He begins by setting before them their holy dignity and spiritual wealth as believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. He thus lifted them up to the great and blessed thoughts of God concerning them, and this is the divine way of correcting a carnal and worldly state. It is God's great lever to lift us up, and my desire is that this lever may be put under our hearts so that we may be lifted up into the holy thoughts of God concerning us.

In the first place the apostle brings before us our holy dignity. Believers were then, and are now, "the assembly of God"; they were then, and are now, "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints". Thus we have great and holy dignity. If the thought of this got hold of us we could not possibly come down to the miserable things of the world which so often attract us. When a christian is carnal and worldly he has lost sight of his holy dignity as a saint.

Have we understood that we are of "the assembly of God"? Nothing would make a greater mark on christians than for them to see that they are of God's assembly. It is not that we ought to be God's assembly, but we are His assembly. I should like to show how this comes about, and what it means.

If we turn to Acts 15:7-9; Acts 15:13,14 we see three things. First, the belief of the gospel; Peter says, "God amongst you chose that the nations by my mouth should hear the word of the glad tidings and believe". Second, the gift of the Spirit; "the heart-knowing God bore them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit as to us also". Third, those who believed, and received the Spirit, were taken out from the gentiles for God's name (verse 14).

Until a person has believed the gospel and received the Spirit he is not really a christian. There are many pious and God-fearing people who have not really believed the word of the gospel. Cornelius was a very pious man, and I suppose, a believer in Jesus before Peter went to him. He was addressed as knowing the word "which he sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ", Acts 10: 36. But he had not heard the word of the gospel until he heard it from Peter, when he received the Holy Spirit by the hearing of faith. Souls ought not to be in this condition now, but the gospel is often so imperfectly presented that, as a matter of fact, there are many in a similar state — God-fearing, believing in Jesus as One sent by God, but not knowing the perfect efficacy of His sacrifice, or that He has been raised again for their justification, and consequently not having peace with God or the gift of the Spirit.

The word of the gospel proclaims a risen Saviour, and remission of sins through faith in Him. It presents a blessed Man who was in death and under judgment, but now for ever out of both in resurrection. Peter spoke to Cornelius and his friends of a risen and glorified Saviour, and told them that "every one that believes on him will receive through his name remission of sins". They all believed and immediately received the gift of the Spirit. Christian blessing is all connected with Christ risen and glorified. A risen Saviour was the great subject of the apostles' testimony all through the Acts. If Christ is risen and glorified the whole work of redemption is finished, and every foe laid low. He has come forth triumphant — raised for our justification.

That is the gospel Paul preached at Corinth. "That Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he was raised the third day, according to the scriptures", 1 Corinthians 15: 3, 4. If you believe in that risen One you have the remission of sins; a risen Christ is your righteousness; and on this ground you receive the Spirit. A christian is one who has believed the word of the gospel and has received the Spirit. He knows God in grace and love through the gospel.

Now God has visited us in this way to take us out of the world for Himself. We have not been converted that we may make the world better, or that we may build up religious causes or systems here, but that we may be taken out of the

gentiles for God's name — to be the church, or assembly of God. There is nothing in the world for God; everything there is ruled by lust and pride, and God is unknown. But he has visited the gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name. We have been converted and have received the Spirit that we might be of God's assembly. This is a very great and holy dignity. There is no great dignity in being a member of a sect or denomination, but there is great dignity in being of God's assembly. It is, indeed, beneath the true dignity of a christian to belong to any human association. Every believer is called to the great dignity of being of God's assembly.

It must be evident that to be of God's assembly necessitates a very high degree of sanctification. We could not be of any assembly of dignity in the world without having qualifications suitable to that assembly. We could not be of the Privy Council or the House of Lords without suitable qualifications. Now the qualification for the assembly of God is sanctification. Nothing else would suit God; He is holy, and He has called us in sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4: 7). All believers are "sanctified in Christ Jesus". If we think of qualification for a human assembly, a man must have certain rank in order to be of the House of Lords, and there are two ways in which he may get it — by inheritance or by gift. Now it is quite certain that none of us have inherited sanctification in a natural way. We inherited sin and defilement (see Psalm 51: 5). The king, by the exercise of his royal prerogative, can make a man a peer who has not inherited any title. He can confer the honour as a gift. It is on that principle that we obtain sanctification; by God's infinite grace we are "sanctified in Christ Jesus".

Now I should like to make clear what it means to be sanctified in Christ Jesus. In order to understand it we must remember that Christ Jesus came into the world to bear our sins and to be made sin for us. He came in flesh for this very purpose, and on the cross He took our place in condemnation and death. Everything that was due to us came upon Him, and was endured by Him in infinite love. And in bearing all that was due to us He really made an end of us before God.

Let me try to put it simply. Suppose God takes account of me, what would He have to record in His book? Many sins, a polluted nature, and, to conclude, the sentence of death recorded against me. Would there be nothing else? No good works, no redeeming features, not one item on the credit side of my account? No, not one. God could not take account of anything else in me but these three things. But if Christ Jesus came into the world in love to bear my sins, and to be made sin sacrificially on my behalf, and to die for me — and He did all this by the grace of God — what is there left for God to take account of in

regard to me? The three things which comprised everything in me of which God could take account are all disposed of and blotted out of His book. If you ask how I stand with God according to His grace, the answer is that God does not take any account of me. All that belonged to me was taken account of and ended at the cross.

Now let me go a little farther. Sins and sin and death were all in the closest contact with the Lord Jesus when He was upon the cross. We adore Him for the love in which He took that place. But the moment He bowed His head in death He had done with sins and sin, and the moment He rose from the dead He had for ever done with death. He is apart from sins and sin and death for ever. I think every believer would assent to this, but it is a great and blessed thing for the soul to get well hold of it.

Christ is apart from sins and sin and death. He came into these things in divine love to us but now He is apart from them all for ever. Do you question it? No, I am sure you do not. Well, then God would have you to know that you are "sanctified in Christ Jesus". It is not that you are apart from sins or sin or death, but He is, and you are sanctified in Him. God now takes account of Christ Jesus and of all believers as being sanctified in Him. God has made Him to be to us sanctification. A Man who is apart from the whole system of evil which obtains here, and all its consequences, is our sanctification. This is the high degree of sanctification that qualifies us to be of God's assembly.

Those who apprehend this are saints — holy ones. A saint is not one who earns the title by his extraordinary personal piety. He is a man who sees that God took account of him at Calvary and made an end of him there, as connected with a world of evil, and that he is now justified and sanctified in a blessed Man at the right hand of God. All believers are saints by divine calling. If the King issues a patent of nobility the person named in it would be called to the dignity which it conferred. He might have been a ploughman or a crossing sweeper before, but he is called to dignity by the royal prerogative. We are saints by divine calling and this is a high and holy dignity.

God has visited us and brought us to believe in Christ; we have received Christ and God has made Him to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. We are of God's assembly, sanctified in Christ Jesus, and saints by divine calling. What blessed grace! If we apprehend it, it will put a great distance between our hearts and the world. We ought to go about with a deep sense of the holy dignity to which God has called us.

Then we have great spiritual wealth in Christ (verses 4, 5). The favour of God is given us in Christ Jesus, and in everything we are enriched in Him. If we are not happy it is because we have lost sight of the favour given us in Christ

Jesus. We are so foolish; we turn to the world or look into our own hearts, instead of keeping our eyes on Christ Jesus, the risen and exalted Man in whom God has given us His favour.

To see that God's favour is given to us in Christ Jesus gives us an idea of the scope and nature of the favour. There may be different measures of favour. If I give a beggar a few pence I shew him favour, but it is not very great. But to see that God has given us favour in Christ Jesus is wonderful. The full scope of it hardly comes out in the scripture before us, but the fulness of it is sonship. Read Galatians 3: 26 to 4: 7. There we see the full blessedness of the favour given us in Christ Jesus. Sonship is the fulness of the blessing of Christ (Romans 15:29). How much need there is for the apostle's ministry of this infinite favour to come to our hearts in divine power! "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one", John 17: 22. I understand the glory which the Father has given to the Lord Jesus to be sonship. "I will be to him for father, and *he* shall be to me for son" (Hebrews 1: 5) speaks of the glory which the Father has given Him as Man, and He has given us that glory. In Christ Jesus we are sons, and thus brought into a unity which lies altogether outside what is of man. Soon this unity will be displayed; the saints will come out conformed to the image of God's Son, and the world will know that the Father sent Him, and that He has loved us as He loves Him. This is the full measure of the favour given us in Christ Jesus. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has "marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will", Ephesians 1: 5. We do not get this blessed fulness developed in 1 Corinthians but we do get there that it is in Christ that we are enriched, and other scriptures give us the fulness of it. "In everything ye have been enriched in him". "Everything" is a big word. We have not to go outside of Christ for anything; our every need is supplied in Him. That comes out at the end of the chapter. We are "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". We have to learn that everything is given to us in another man.

Christ Jesus is made unto us wisdom from God. Philosophers exercise their minds on the state of things in this world, but they cannot find any solution of the problems which sin has introduced. The simplest believer has more wisdom as to these things than the greatest philosophers. An old monk said, 'Would'st thou know the wisdom and wonders of God's everlasting plan? Behold on the cross of dishonour a cursed and a dying Man!' God met the whole question of sin with His own wisdom by sending His Son into this world to die. That wondrous death has become the tomb of all that was contrary to

God and the birth-place of every spiritual blessing. The more I think of the death of Christ the more I see the wisdom of God in it. This is a terrible scene of evil; I do not wonder at men going out of their minds if they look at the confusion and darkness without the knowledge of God. But it is most blessed to see the wisdom of God coming into such a scene and in such a way. So that evil is removed in holy judgment and all that is good and of God is brought in and established in righteousness.

Then Christ Jesus is made unto us "righteousness". If we look at ourselves in God's light we see that we have no righteousness. But Christ has been raised again for our justification. A devoted and greatly honoured servant of God said on his death bed, 'Christ is my righteousness, and that settles everything'. You cannot have a doubt or a misgiving if you see that a risen Christ is your righteousness. You go along with your heart full of peace and joy and praise.

"And holiness"; can you measure the distance between Christ on the Father's throne and any shade of sin's defilement? That blessed One is made unto us holiness. As we pass through this scene of evil where feet and garments are so easily defiled, God cleanses us morally by ministering Christ to us in the power of the Holy Spirit as our sanctification.

Then He is also made unto us "redemption". He is coming again to take us actually out of this flesh and blood condition, and out of all the circumstances in which we come in contact with what is evil here. He is going to end our pilgrim story very soon in the glory of His own presence. Men have gone out of their minds through intense application to the reckoning of days and years in prophetic periods, but the only prophetic period we need to consider is "the twinkling of an eye", 1 Corinthians 15: 52. There are other prophetic periods for Israel and the nations but this is the one for us.

Beloved friends, what a present is ours and what a future! Christ has gone to the Father to prepare a place for us; He is holding that place in the Father's love for us. It is our privilege to be 'in spirit there already', but the moment is fast approaching when we shall be in it actually. The Lord Himself will descend with an assembling shout, and we shall be caught up together with the raised saints to meet Him in the air, to be for ever with Him. These bodies of humiliation will be transformed into conformity to His body of glory; we shall bear the image of the heavenly One. Then will be seen in public display the grand triumph of God in redemption. And God 'gives us now as heavenly light, what soon shall be our part'.

Why are all these blessed things presented to us? It is that the holy dignity and spiritual wealth which are ours as in Christ Jesus may be a mighty lever under our hearts to lift us up from everything that is carnal and worldly and

earthly. May God give our souls to know the mighty elevating power of this blessed ministry, and make it effectual in each one of us!

THINGS WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION (ADDRESS)

1 Corinthians 10: 1 - 13

There are some parts of Scripture that are attractive to the hearts of all believers because they present the grace of God or the Person and love of Christ in a special way. It is always a joy to the servants of the Lord to speak on such scriptures. The verses I have read can hardly be said to have this attractive character, but they are nevertheless deeply important.

If that which is of God is to be built up in the souls of His people it is often necessary to pull down things which are contrary to God in order to make way for what is spiritual. The ground has to be cleared. If we do not get on spiritually it is because there is some hindrance at work; a scripture like this calls our attention to the hindrances that we may judge them and get rid of them.

The apostle reverts to the history of the children of Israel to point out the solemn possibility of there being a great contrast between the dispensation of God and the condition of those who are brought into the benefits of that dispensation. Christianity is, on God's part, the most wonderful dispensation of blessing ever brought near to men and it subsists here in the power of the Holy Spirit. Everyone who has acknowledged Jesus as Lord and come into the christian profession has come within the circle of that dispensation. The apostle is pointing out that it is possible to be externally in a great system of blessing, and yet, as to our condition, to be displeasing to God. It is very solemn to think of this.

Five features of God's dispensation are mentioned, and then five characteristics of the condition of the people are alluded to by way of contrast. The condition of the people was entirely out of harmony with the dispensation of God in the outward benefits of which they were found. This drew down judgment upon them: "they were strewed in the desert". We are told that "all these things happened to them as types, and have been written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come". This is very solemn and instructive.

Let us first look a little in detail at what I have spoken of — for want of a better word — as the dispensation of God. I mean by this the way by which God had made Himself known to the people, and in which He had acted for their blessing. Certain things were true on God's side; He acted on His part in the fulness of grace, and all the people came, in an outward way, into the benefit of His attitude towards His people.

First, "all our fathers were under the cloud". It is very striking that this should be the first statement. Paul does not begin by saying that they were under the blood, but "under the cloud". He begins at the point when Israel first learned that God was for them. God would not only provide a shelter from deserved judgment, but in presence of all the power of the enemy He would cover them with the cloud of His power and love. God was for His people, let them be what they were. In His love and in His pity He redeemed them to make Himself an everlasting and glorious Name. In His everlasting love He overshadowed the people with the cloud of His presence. He knew what they were and what they would prove themselves to be, but He also knew His own thoughts concerning them, and, regarding them according to those thoughts and on the ground of the blood of the Lamb, He overshadowed them with the cloud of His glory.

If we want to know God's thoughts concerning His people we may learn them in the words of Balaam at a later date in Israel's history: "He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen wrong in Israel", Numbers 23: 20, 21. It is good thus to see the disposition of God's heart towards His people. He is for them in the most absolute way; they are under the guardian cloud of His power and love.

Second, we read that they "all passed through the sea". They passed through that which was typical of the death of Christ on to entirely new ground before God. It is by redemption that God secures His people for Himself. He takes them up, not according to what the flesh is, but according to the value of the death of Christ, according to the efficacy of that in which the flesh has been judged and ended before God. And if God takes up His people on that ground it becomes a necessity that they should by faith occupy that ground before Him. Hence we read, "By faith they passed through the Red sea as through dry land", Hebrews 11: 29. Death is the place where man has no footing, but in the death of Christ God has turned the sea into dry land, so that there is solid ground on which we may walk by faith into an entirely new place with God where Christ risen is known as our righteousness. The gospel of the grace of God makes known the blessed fact that the believer is justified before God and that Christ is his righteousness. This is the simple and blessed truth of christianity. It is the mind of God concerning those who believe. So the apostle could say to the Corinthians, "But ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified, but ye have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God", 1 Corinthians 6: 11.

Third, "All were baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea". With an evident allusion to christian baptism the apostle speaks thus. Outwardly, and

in the most significant way, the people were committed to the control and leadership of Moses. They were identified with him in the most singular and impressive way. The christian is baptised unto Christ; he is identified with Christ in the mind of God, and in baptism he is identified with the name and lordship of Christ in this world. He may not be true to his baptism; he may fail to realise what is involved in it, but that is the character of it. Every baptised person is on the ground of obedience to Christ as Lord.

Fourth, "All ate the same spiritual food". The reference here is undoubtedly to the manna, and it seems probable that the Lord's supper is in the mind of the Spirit who is seeking to show that there might be outward participation in things which expressed the favour of God to His people without any real answer to His pleasure. The Lord's supper is surely a very great expression of divine favour, but the fact that we partake of it is no guarantee that we really answer to His pleasure.

Fifth, "All drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them: (now the rock was the Christ;)". All participated in the favours which God was dispensing to His people, but the Holy Spirit calls our attention to this to point out that there was no pleasure for God in most of those who did thus participate in His mercy and favour. "Yet God was not pleased with the most of them, for they were strewed in the desert". Intensely solemn words! They are words not to be neglected by us, for we are expressly told that "these things happened as types of us, that we should not be lusters ...".

The manifestations of divine grace in christianity are wonderful. There is no poverty, no lack of blessing. In a coming day God will give effect in power and glory to His own thoughts about His people, and it is a comfort to think of this in presence of all the failures of today. But the great thing is that the thoughts of God should lay hold of our souls now. If His grace and purpose dwell in our hearts they will necessarily displace what is of the flesh. If what is of God comes into our hearts it must displace the flesh and the world. But the solemn thing is that we may be in the circle where all God's favour and blessing is made known without our being morally affected and formed by it.

God does not call upon us to originate anything; what He looks for is response. There is nothing good in man save that which responds to God, the outcome of His own grace in man. God rolls down a full tide of blessing on His people and He looks for response. If there is no response to God there is no life. It shows that people are identified in their affections with the world and the flesh rather than with the thoughts of God. We are either identified in heart with what is of God, or with what is under God's judgment. The people

who identified themselves with the flesh "were strewed in the desert". Many of the Corinthian assembly were not really responding to God, and many among them were falling in the wilderness: "On this account many among you are weak and infirm, and a good many are fallen asleep", 1 Corinthians 11: 30. Flesh was in activity and it was being dealt with in judgment by the Lord. In this matter it is impossible to maintain neutrality. If we do not respond to God we most surely respond to the flesh and the world.

In sad and painful contrast with all the privileges of the people was their practical condition. The apostle brings forward five characteristics of that condition.

First, "That we should not be lusters after evil things, as they also lusted". I conceive that the reference intended here is to what we find recorded in Numbers 11.

The people had been more than a year in the wilderness: more than a year they had experienced God's gracious ways with them. At the end of this time we find them first complaining and then lusting. I have observed that a complaining spirit is the sure precursor of further evil. A satisfied heart would not be likely to turn towards Egypt. And solemn indeed is the cause of their complaint: "There is nothing at all but the manna before our eyes", Numbers 11: 6. Alas, alas! when the perfect grace of Christ, seen in perfection in the steps of His blessed pathway of humiliation here and now ministered by Him from glory to His own in wilderness circumstances here, becomes distasteful to the heart and mind of the believer! It is not exactly discontent with circumstances here, but distaste for what comes from heavens.. It is but a short journey from this point to lusting after evil things, the things of Egypt, the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. It has often been remarked that these things were the food of slaves in Egypt. They typify the things which appeal to the taste and appetite of the flesh.

There are things in the world which are most gratifying to the flesh, and there is always danger of the taste for them being revived. As it has been remarked, the reminiscences of Egypt are a fruitful source of danger. And a very solemn thing in connection with this is that, as a rule, God allows us to have what we lust after. Eve, Lot, Achan, David and many others bear witness to the general truth of this, and it is plainly stated in the words of Psalm 106: 15 "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul". God does not restrain His people in an arbitrary way, as a general principle, for we read in Hebrews 11: 15, "If they had called to mind that from whence they went out, they had had opportunity to have returned". If we sow to the flesh we shall surely of the flesh reap corruption. "Jehovah smote the people with a very great plague.

And they called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah; because there they buried the people who lusted", Numbers 11: 33, 34.

Second, "Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play". It was in the absence of Moses that this idolatry took place. It was thus at a moment which is typical of that in which our lot is cast. Christ is on high, and many who profess His name might well say, "We do not know what is become of him", Exodus 32: 1. How suggestive it is that Aaron, the religious leader of the people, is the one to cause them to err. It has been thus in the history of christendom. An unseen Person on high, having His interests maintained by an unseen Person here, would have no hold upon the mind of the flesh.

Men have craved something visible, either as an object of worship or as an aid to worship, and their leaders have furnished them with pictures, images, crucifixes, magnificent buildings, music and a sacramental system with a visible priesthood which is well qualified to meet every desire of the religious mind.

Along with all this, licence is given to men to enjoy everything that is in the world. There is no mourning an absent Christ, no confession of the sad state of the world that has rejected Him, no simple and true confession of His blessed name. The theatre, the ballroom, the racecourse and all the ten thousand frivolities of modern society are held to be quite consistent with regular attendance at church! In such cases the actual object of worship is man's lusts and pleasures, and the fact that a certain form of godliness is maintained at the same time in no wise changes the actual character of it in the sight of God. Such persons are idolaters. While we see this so conspicuously in christendom let us not forget that the very essence of this idolatry is self-indulgence in the absence of Christ. One may travel a long way on that road without going to the extreme lengths of which I have spoken. It is a serious question for everyone who calls on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ as to how far we are living a life of self-indulgence and self-gratification. It is possible to be doing so in a very quiet and orderly way, and with a line strictly drawn at certain things which we are pleased to designate as worldly. Yet, withal, it may be true that we get on very comfortably and enjoyably in the world, and as to any practical place that Christ holds in the heart it might be said, "We do not know what is become of him!"

It is no time for self-indulgence, for joining in the merriment of fools. Woe betide the christian who descends to traffic in the unholy mirth of the ungodly, who sits down to eat and drink the world's fiction and its foolish jests! It is no time to be frivolous, for amid the almost universal pleasure seeking, a voice

sounds clearly out as of old, "Who is on the Lord's side", Exodus 32: 26 (Authorised Version) Moses would recognise no neutrality. He called for pronounced and uncompromising loyalty, loyalty that would be prepared to gird on the sword and to "slay every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbour", Exodus 32: 27. This is no holiday amusement, no easy-going path of self-indulgence, but it is a divine picture of the path of discipleship today.

It is interesting to note that it was in connection with this same idolatry that the tent came to be pitched outside the camp. We are told "it came to pass that every one who sought Jehovah went out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp", Exodus 33: 7. What follows this is most interesting, for we see, in perfect contrast to the idolatry of the people, Moses admitted to the most intimate nearness to Jehovah. "Jehovah spoke with Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend", Exodus 33: 11. Encouraged by this favour Moses prays, "And now, if indeed I have found grace in thine eyes, make me now to know thy way, that I may know thee", (verse 13), and then later he says, "Let me, I pray thee, see thy glory", (verse 18). It was all over with the people on the ground of responsibility, and therefore it became with the man of faith entirely a question of what God was.

There is something profoundly interesting in all this; it is lovely in its moral beauty and perfection. But we must not dwell longer upon it at present or it will take us too far away from our present theme.

Third, "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed fornication, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand". It is very solemn to note that this occurred just at the end of the wilderness, "by the Jordan of Jericho", Numbers 26: 3. It was Satan's last assault upon the people before they crossed the Jordan. They had had to do with him as the oppressor in Egypt, and as the destroyer (Amalek) in the wilderness, but now they fall into his power as the crafty seducer. It was by the counsel of Balaam (Numbers 31: 16) that they were taken in this snare and it is expressly said by Jehovah, "They have harassed you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you", Numbers 25: 18.

There are many who can endure a great amount of opposition and pursue this way in spite of many difficulties, who fall before the seducing power of the world. Hence the apostle John in writing to those who were strong and had the word of God abiding in them and had overcome the wicked one, exhorts them to "love not the world". We might apply to the world the solemn warning of the wise king, "Let not thy heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her

paths: for she hath cast down many wounded, and all slain by her were strong", Proverbs 7:25 - 26.

The world is presented in Scripture as the great rival to God in the affections of His people. To be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God. There is a peculiar power in the world to displace God from the hearts of His people. It may often seem very fair and attractive, and it often allures by things which seem innocent enough, but there is a terrible power in it to displace God in the hearts of men. When we see this it helps us to understand the language which is used in connection with that part of Israel's history which is now before us. Jehovah says of Phinehas, "He was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy", Numbers 25: 11. If on the one hand it is very blessed that God is jealous as to the affections of His people, on the other hand it is intensely solemn. "Jealousy is cruel as Sheol: The flashes thereof are flashes of fire, Flames of Jah", Song of Songs 8: 6.

God cannot tolerate a rival in the affections of His people. If we admit the world into our hearts we admit something that God will have to burn up some day. He will assuredly destroy that which loves the world. I have no doubt the Corinthians had been guilty in large measure of this spiritual fornication. They were entangled in all kinds of unholy and worldly associations and God was practically destroying the flesh by discipline which had extended in many cases as far as death itself. "Many among you are weak and infirm, and a good many are fallen asleep", 1 Corinthians 11: 30.

In the second epistle the apostle is quite in accord with the mind of the Lord about them: he is the Phinehas of the New Testament. "I am jealous as to you with a jealousy which is of God; for I have espoused you unto one man, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craft, so your thoughts should be corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ", 2 Corinthians 11: 2 - 3.

A very sad indication of declension in Pergamos is pointed out by the Lord when He says, "Thou hast there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a snare before the sons of Israel, to eat of idol sacrifices and commit fornication", Revelation 2: 14. May God give us wisdom to discern the snare of worldly associations, and grace to keep clear of them!

Fourth, "Neither let us tempt the Christ, as some of them tempted, and perished by serpents". It is of interest to note that there were two Meribahs in the wilderness: we read of one in Exodus 17, and of the other in Numbers 20; that is, one was at the very beginning of the wilderness and the other was at the end. I think the two are connected in the mind of the Spirit in this verse in

1 Corinthians 10. They serve to show that the flesh is the same all through. Forty years experience of the goodness and mercy of God made not the slightest difference in the disposition of the flesh. They tempted the Lord at the beginning and they tempted Him at the end. "Give us water, that we may drink!" was their cry to Moses in Exodus 17: 2. "And Moses said to them, Why do ye dispute with me? Why do ye tempt Jehovah?" And in verse 7 we read, "He called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they had tempted Jehovah, saying, Is Jehovah among us, or not?" (Massah means 'temptation' and Meribah 'contention').

It is in reference to this that we get the solemn word in Deuteronomy 6: 16, "Ye shall not tempt Jehovah your God, as ye tempted him in Massah". This again is the very scripture used by the Lord to silence the devil in Luke 4. To put God to the test argues great lack of confidence in Him. If we know Christ we do not need to put Him to the test. To tempt Christ would be the outcome of a selfish and self-seeking spirit upon which Satan could work. It may be that there was something very much akin to this in the way in which the Corinthians were using their divine gifts. It was divine grace used by them to minister self-importance. This was distinctly Satanic in its origin and no doubt it opened the way for Satan's ministers to get among the Corinthians as ministers of righteousness. There was that already amongst the saints which was akin to the character of their ministry. So far as we can learn from Scripture (Luke 4), to tempt God or Christ is peculiarly a form of evil suggested and inspired by Satan and a judgment comes on it which marks its character: they "perished by serpents".

Fifth, "Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer". This feature of the condition of the people, though not the last historically, is the last, one may say, morally. It was when the spies brought their report of the land that the murmuring arose which is here alluded to. They were almost on the threshold of the land, but the spies' evil report so discouraged them that they wished they had died in the land of Egypt or in the wilderness, and they proposed to make a captain and return to Egypt. When Joshua and Caleb would have encouraged them to go up to possess the land they said that they should be stoned with stones. But for the intercession of Moses — blessed type of Christ in this respect — the people would have been destroyed; but on the ground of his intercession God pardoned, though, at the same time, pronouncing judgment upon the evil generation which had seen His glory and His miracles and yet did not hearken to His voice: "In this wilderness shall your carcasses fall", Numbers 14: 29.

God says in 1 Corinthians 10 that some of them murmured. With the exception of Moses and Aaron we read of two only who did not murmur, Joshua and Caleb. They were the only two who did not perish by the destroyer (see Numbers 26: 63 - 65).

It is sad to think how people despise the pleasant land today, and lose sight of God's power to bring them into it. If heavenly things, the things connected with divine love and purpose, are put before them they look upon them merely as beautiful sentiments of no practical value, and as quite inaccessible to all but perhaps a very few. They do not respond to the love and purpose of God and they do not count on His power. They are very much in the same mind as those who were strewn in the desert.

Moses had power as an intercessor because he connected God's glory with His people. He says, as it were, 'They are a miserable set of people, but Thou hast connected Thy glory with them'. This is how faith ever looks at things; and the man who connects God's glory with His people is always a man of spiritual power both with God and for God. God pardoned, but in His holy government all that generation fell in the wilderness. Flesh must fall in the wilderness, either as being judged and practically set aside in the saint or as destroyed under the governmental hand of God.

The things we have been looking at are very serious realities. "Now all these things happened to them as types, and have been written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. So that let him that thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall". May God give us grace to accept these wholesome admonitions and to be warned by them!

THE ASSEMBLY AS THE PLACE OF TRUE EDIFICATION (ADDRESS)

1 Corinthians 12: 1 - 13

What is before me tonight, beloved friends, is to say a little, as the Lord may help me, about the assembly as the place where our souls are edified. It is a very blessed thing for us to consider that God has provided us with a home in this world. If we have been brought to know the Lord Jesus as the One who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification, so that we have peace with God through Him, God would have us to know that there is a place for His saints in this world, and that place is the assembly.

If we look round us in the religious world we see all kinds of sects and parties, and they all profess to be right, and they all have some scripture to allege as proof that they are right. But we do not find in Scripture that it was either God's mind that His saints should be isolated individuals or that they should be found in sects of their own choosing. What we find in Scripture is that God has an assembly; Paul addressed the Corinthians as the church or assembly of God, and all through his epistle he takes it for granted that they would come together in assembly because they loved one another. Now, beloved friends, we have to recognise the fact that we are called by God's grace to have a place in God's assembly, not in any sect but in God's assembly.

It is important for us to realise the great dignity of this place. James says in Acts 15: 14 that God has "visited to take out of the nations a people for his name"; that is God's assembly. I should like everyone to see that it is a fact that God has an assembly; He has visited the gentiles to take out of them a people for His name — not for any other name, but for God's name. The way that Scripture presents the assembly is as the home for all believers and as the place where saints are edified. It is before me to speak a little about the assembly as the place where edification is found — where we get spiritually built up and enlarged, and where we grow by the knowledge of God. It seems pretty plain that at Corinth they had lost the idea of being God's assembly and therefore they had lost the secret of edification, and that is very much the case at the present time. If believers do not know what it is to belong to God's assembly they will not know much about true edification. If saints go on for ten, twenty or thirty years and never grow spiritually or get spiritually enlarged, it is evident that they have lost the secret of edification.

It is remarkable that eleven chapters of this epistle pass by before the apostle begins to speak on the subject of spiritual manifestations; that is, before he alludes to those activities of the Spirit in the assembly which work for the

edification of the saints. Now what are these eleven chapters taken up with? Well, it seems to me that the apostle lays down the lines on which all true edification must come. If we preach and talk one to another without knowing what we are about, instead of there being edification there will be disorder, and the saints will be diminished instead of enlarged. The apostle first lays down the lines upon which all true edification must proceed. Four things come out in the previous eleven chapters; and it is along the lines of these four things that all true edification proceeds. The first is the grace of God, the second is the faithfulness of God, the third is the presence of the Holy Spirit and the fourth is the love of Christ.

If you turn to chapter 1, verse 4 he says, "I thank my God always about you, in respect of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus; that in everything ye have been enriched in him" and so on. And in verses 30 and 31, of the same chapter, "But of him 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". If we do not understand the grace of God, we shall not have our faces in the right direction for edification. The apostle gives thanks that the grace of God had been given to the saints in Christ Jesus; in everything they were enriched in Him. Now that gives the soul an entirely new starting point; God has come out to us according to the grace that is set forth in Christ Jesus. God has enriched us with the grace that is found embodied in a risen and glorified Man. That is God's starting point. Very often we think of everything from our side, and we think of the death of Christ as the climax, but the death of Christ was God's way, not God's end. He sent His Son into this world — "come of woman, come under law" — that He might accomplish redemption, that He might bear our sins, that He might come under death and judgment for us, so that He might close up our history as in the flesh by the sacrifice of Himself.

Beloved Christian, let me assure you that your history according to the flesh, with all the sins and imperfections that attached to it, was closed up sacrificially when Christ died upon the cross.

But then, as I said, that was God's way, it was not God's end. God did not stop, if I may say so, at Calvary. His beloved Son was taken down from the cross and put in the grave, and on the morning of the third day He was raised by the glory of the Father, and as a risen, glorified Man He sat down in His Father's throne. He was set down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, and God's glory in supreme grace shines forth in Him. Now that is the starting point of christianity. God comes out to us in all the grace of that glorified Man. God has opened a new volume of grace and glory by setting His

beloved Son at His own right hand, and God's grace is given to us in Him. The knowledge of this gives the believer a good start. Many a person knows his sins are forgiven but his heart is upon the earth still. God wants to lift our souls by the mighty power of His grace up to the level of that blessed glory-crowned Man at His right hand. God has achieved the great thought of His heart and has glorified His grace in the person of His beloved Son, and that is the grace that He gives to His saints. This is a good start. God would start each of us with the sense that our grace and our blessing are in a heavenly Christ "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", 1 Corinthians 1: 30, 31. God has filled us with material for boasting, because we are enriched in a risen and heavenly Christ. Do you know what it is to be enriched in a heavenly Christ? You may say, 'I do not understand that; I know that He died for me and I believe He is risen'. But it is in a glorified One that we are enriched.

Then along with the grace of God you get the preaching of the cross. There are two things the apostle speaks of in the first chapter of this epistle. He speaks of the preaching of Christ and he speaks of the preaching of the cross. It is easy to see that God's grace has come to us in that risen, glorified Man, and it is on the ground of the cross in which is set forth the entire rejection of man after the flesh. The reason why Christians do not enter into the true blessing of grace is because they are not prepared to accept the way of the cross; they are not prepared to accept that man in the flesh must be altogether set aside. The flesh must go from before God in the holy judgment of the cross. If we are conscious that we are enriched in the Man that is at God's right hand we shall be prepared to listen to the word of the cross, which tells how man in the flesh has been set aside in the death of Christ. I am pointing this out to show the line on which souls get edified. I do not think the Corinthians were on that line at all, but the apostle seeks to put them on the true line of the grace of God and the cross. That is the first thing.

Now the second point is the faithfulness of God. Paul says, "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord", 1 Corinthians 1: 9. In chapter 10, verse 13 he says, "No temptation has taken you but such as is according to man's nature; and God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able to bear, but will with the temptation make the issue also, so that ye should be able to bear it". There you get an explicit statement of the faithfulness of God. It is very wonderful that the apostle should speak of the faithfulness of God to the Corinthians. They had entirely broken down under the grace of God. In the light and blessing of God's grace they had proved themselves a complete

failure. The apostle was going to let the light of God shine in upon them, but before he does so he lays it down as the impregnable rock of blessing that God is faithful. It is an immense thing for us to see this. I suppose we have all felt more or less how we have failed under the grace of God. We have been made to feel how very little we have answered to it, how little we have walked here in the joy and power of grace and in the light of the cross. We have all had to feel that we have broken down under grace. What is going to be the mainstay, pillar and resource of our hearts if it is not the faithfulness of God? It is only God's faithfulness that keeps us in this day of ruin and departure. In the wilderness the children of Israel broke down under the grace of God and what was the resource? The resource in that day was the faithfulness of God: Joshua and Caleb clung to the faithfulness of God; they said, as it were, 'We may have broken down, but God has not broken down; God has not given up His thought; God has not forsaken His purpose. If the Lord delight in us He will bring us in'.

The faithfulness of God is an impregnable rock in the midst of man's breakdown and the confusion of christendom. We have to turn to God. What marks the true saint is that he clings to the faithfulness of God. He is willing to admit his own failure and breakdown and that everything that has been put into man's hand has come to ruin but he clings to this, that God is faithful.

You remember in 2 Timothy, when the apostle is speaking of all the disorder that has come in, he says, "Yet the firm foundation of God stands". God is faithful to His own thoughts and purposes; He is faithful to what is in His own mind and He is not going to give up the blessing of His saints; He is not going to be thwarted.

But we do not get the comfort of this unless we are walking in holy separation from the world of evil. God has called us to a holy fellowship. "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord". God is not only faithful to His eternal purposes — but that is only one side of it — but He is faithful to His eternal principles. Immediately after it says that "the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knows those that are his", we read, "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity". No one has the comfort of God's faithfulness except as he acts on God's principles.

This is a very important point, because we should all like to have the comfort of God's faithfulness. I do not suppose there is any christian but would like this. Well, if we want the comfort of God's faithfulness we shall have to act on God's principles. God has called us to the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ

our Lord, and if we are true to that fellowship it involves being found in the fellowship of Christ's death. We get that in chapter 10.

There is a broad line of separation between the christian company and the world. There is nothing more pitiful than to see christians creeping as near to the world as they can get. It has been said that there are many Christians who want as much of the world as they can get with a good conscience. But if our hearts were right it would not be a question of how near we could get to the world, but how far we could get away from it. We have to remember that God called us to be a separate people, and the measure of our separation cannot be anything less than this, that Christ has died here. The cross of Christ has come between the christian and this world.

Now, beloved friends, are we afraid of the cross and death of Christ? Do you know that if God puts the cross, the death of Christ, between us and the world, it is not to deprive us of anything that is good, but it is to preserve us from the contamination of the world? You may depend upon it, beloved young christian, that though the world puts on a pleasant smile for you, and has all kinds of interesting things to put before you, there is great contamination in it, and you cannot touch it without being hindered and damaged. You do not want what is of man if you are in the light and joy of what is of God. God has treasured up His own purpose in Christ and He is not going to be turned aside, but to have the joy and comfort of this we must come out and be separate. If we do not leave those religious associations that carry the stamp of man upon them, we shall not get the full comfort and joy of knowing the faithfulness of God. It is the man who acts on God's principles who gets the comfort of God's faithfulness.

I pass on to the third thing, the presence of the Spirit of God. Let us read chapter 3, verse 16, "Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any one corrupt the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye", and in chapter 6, verses 15 - 17 it says, "Do ye not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then, taking the members of the Christ, make them members of a harlot? Far be the thought. Do ye not know that he that is joined to the harlot is one body? for the two, he says, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit". Now we come to another great fact in christianity. We not only know God in grace and know Him in faithfulness, but we are the temple of God, because the Spirit of God dwells in us. Many a man who has the Spirit has never come to the recognition of that great fact. You will notice how the apostle says three or four times, "Do ye not know?" He did not mean simply, 'Are you aware of the fact?' but 'Have you really

recognised the fact?' We all believe that Christians have the Spirit; we hold it as part of our creed, but it is a wonderful moment in the history of a soul when he comes to recognise that he has the Spirit. God's Spirit dwells in us and in that way we become the temple of God collectively, and our bodies become the members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

There are two very great things in connection with the temple of God: the grace of God and God's faithfulness — the two things we have seen alluded to in chapter 1. If you refer to 1 Kings 8 you will find in King Solomon's prayer that these two things characterise the temple. It was the place where God's name was set up in testimony, so that God's loving-kindness was available for every nation. That is one great thought of the temple of God and the other is the witness of His faithfulness. Now that is what the saints are in this world. They are the living shrine of God's testimony, and from them there goes out into this world the testimony of God's loving-kindness, God's grace to men. That is one side of it, and then on the other side there is found there the witness that God is faithful. God has brought to pass all His thoughts and all His purposes; He has fulfilled the counsel of His love. He has brought His people into the land. He has established them there and has made them His temple, so that they can be in testimony for Himself. Are we prepared to recognise that we are here for God's pleasure and for God's praise?

In chapter 6 he says, "Your bodies are members of Christ". We are joined to the Lord, we are one Spirit with the Lord at God's right hand. What kind of sanctification will suit those who are joined to the Lord? Will a man joined to the Lord get as near to the world as he can? Not a bit of it, he will get as far from it as he can. I ask every young Christian here: Would you not like to keep a place for Christ in this world? Christ has been rejected, and when He went away He said to His servants, "Occupy till I come". He said, 'Keep a place for me till I come back'. Now Christ is away from this world and He has left us here to keep a place for Him, and where is it? It is in these bodies. It says, "Your bodies are members of Christ". The only place that Christ has in this world is in the bodies of His saints. The only witness for Christ in this world comes out through the bodies of the saints. "Your bodies are members of Christ". What a privilege to be entrusted to keep something for Christ here in this world! To keep ourselves pure, separate, detached from this world, to hold ourselves so apart from the flesh that Christ can be expressed in these mortal bodies.

I have often thought about those mighty men of David spoken of in 1 Chronicles 11: 13, 14. When the Philistines came there was a little piece of a field with some barley in it, and it is recorded that those men stood up against

the Philistines and delivered it. And God said it was a great deliverance — a little piece of a barley field! It was a bit of God's land and they held it for God, and it was a great deliverance. You have got your little bit of a field — that body that is a member of Christ. It is not your own: you have been bought with a price and you have to hold that bit for Christ. We have to hold ourselves for Christ and for God in this world.

Now there is another thing I want to speak of, and that comes out in chapter 11, verses 23, 24. "For I received from the Lord, that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which he was delivered up, took bread, and having given thanks broke it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me". I read that scripture because it seems to me that the great thing that comes out in connection with the Lord's supper is divine love. And I do not know anything that has power to subdue what is of the flesh like divine love. The Corinthians were going on with the outward act of eating the Lord's supper, but it is very clear that it had ceased to be to them the voice of divine love, so they were not subdued, they were not lowly in heart. They were eating the Supper in a merely external way, without being really in the presence of divine love.

I suppose all Christians have an instinctive feeling that there is something peculiarly blessed and holy about the Lord's supper. There are three things expressed in the very fact that we come together to eat the Supper, and the first is that the Lord loves His saints. The bread and the cup speak of that in which His love has found its most profound and blessed expression; He loves His saints. And the second thing is that His saints love Him. The Lord's supper is the most simple thing conceivable; if you look at it from a natural point of view it is a company of people come together to break bread and to drink of the cup; but what makes it so great and blessed is that there is a company here of those who love the One who died. It is by His death that He has put the seal of His love for ever on our hearts. And the third thing is that they love one another. These are the three great things that centre in the Lord's supper. The Lord loves His saints, and His saints love Him, and they love one another. It is a circle of love.

We do not learn divine love by reading about it, or hearing about it, or even by praying about it. We learn divine love in the circle where it is at home, and when the Lord brings His own together to eat His supper, He binds their hearts to Himself and to one another in the immediate presence of His living love. It is there we learn divine love. And the effect is we are subdued, humbled, and profound self-judgment is brought about. When I think of myself according to the flesh, what am I? I am Judas, I am the man that is not a bit affected by

the love of Christ. There was a man who did not care a bit about the love of Christ, and the flesh in you and me does not care any more about the love of Christ than Judas did. He was insensible to the love of Christ. But if we have been born of God and have been brought into the circle of grace and been taught of God, we become very sensitive to the blessed love of Christ, and He brings us to the Supper in order to bring us under the influence of that love. The effect is that we are formed in the blessed character that is spoken of in chapter 13 of this epistle.

Now the apostle can speak about spiritual manifestations, and in chapters 12 and 14 he speaks about the action of the Spirit in the assembly by which souls would be edified. What I wanted to suggest was that the line on which edification proceeds is laid down in the previous part of the epistle. We have to be built up in the knowledge of God's grace and God's faithfulness. We have to be brought to recognise the moral consequences of the Spirit of God being here. We have to be built up in the consciousness of divine love, the love that has been expressed in the death of Christ and is continually brought afresh to our hearts in the Lord's supper. This is the line of edification, and the result would be that we are all bound together and consider one another in love, just as in the natural body every member serves all the other members in unselfish love. There is not a single member of your body that has the least bit of selfishness about it.

If danger threatened your head, every other member of the body would come to the rescue without considering its own safety at all. There is perfect unselfish love in the members of the natural body, and in the same way with the body of Christ. The saints are bound together in the knowledge of the grace of God and His faithfulness, and in all that subsists here in the power of the Spirit and in the knowledge of divine love. If God's people were bound together in the knowledge of these things they would be delivered from the miserable selfishness that belongs to the flesh. Paul could tell the Corinthians that they were the body of Christ. Well then, if that is the case let it be manifested. The result would be that the whole body bound together would be nourished, ministered to, and would edify itself in love.

God has furnished us with a circle where we can find edification. I would like the youngest believer here to remember that God has called us to have a place in His assembly, and in God's assembly the things that are prominent are all of God. Everything that is prominent in God's assembly must be of God — His grace, His faithfulness, His love. We may get into this circle as very little babes, knowing very little about either God's grace, or His faithfulness, or His love. But we come there to grow and every influence that we find in God's

assembly helps us to understand better His grace, His faithfulness and His love. God's assembly has not been taken away from this earth and every influence in that assembly tends to help and edify. There are distinctions of gifts, of services and of operations (1 Corinthians 12: 4 - 6), but everything that is in God's assembly tends to make His grace and His faithfulness and His love greater realities to our hearts. Thus we are built up in the knowledge of God, we serve one another in unselfish love, and in that way the body edifies itself.

I trust each one may consider this subject more fully, that we may all find more the reality of the assembly as the place of true edification.

2 CORINTHIANS 1 (FIRST READING)

2 Corinthians 1:15-24

CAC The way the apostle connects the character of his own service with the stability of God's ways in Christ is very beautiful.

TH He was jealous lest the effect of his altering his plans should disparage his ministry.

CAC There is the very practical suggestion in all this that the ways of a servant must be in keeping with his ministry, even in such a matter as his going to a place or not going. It was all to be ordered on the same principles as the greatest ways of God in Christ.

TH There is a tendency in us to use lightness; we might make a promise and when the time comes not be able to fulfil it.

CAC Of course you might fully purpose to do a thing, and in the ordering of God you might not be able to.

A Paul was often hindered.

CAC Yes; he says elsewhere, "Satan hindered". He tells them (verse 23), "To spare you I have not yet come to Corinth". If he had come amongst them in the state of disorder they were in, he would have been very severe and he did not wish that. He did not change his mind in a capricious way; he had a reason.

TH "Lest my God should humble me as to you when I come again", 2 Corinthians 12: 21.

CAC Yes. Paul had great exercise and sorrow of heart about their state; they were his children. He had an object in not going to them; he did not do things in a careless way.

A Would you say that ministry either produces exercise or hardens?

CAC It always produces exercise where there is a work of God. But sometimes you feel there is nothing to work on, so that nothing you say or do has any effect.

When there is a work of God, divine ministry always produces exercise.

TH We could always find a cause for self-judgment.

CAC Sometimes we find nothing else! Paul had confidence in the Corinthians, but at the same time great exercise. He was on a positive line, not yea and

nay. His was a positive ministry of Christ, and his ways were as positive as his ministry.

A False teachers tried to trip up the apostle.

CAC His ways were a great contrast to theirs. They tried in every possible way to disparage and reduce him.

He had purposed to go to Corinth and had not gone, and people might have said that he was walking in the flesh and that there was nothing divinely stable in him. So he had to tell them it was not so. There was the same stability about the servant as about his ministry. It is a great principle that the servant's ways are to partake of the same character as his ministry.

How wonderful it is to have to do with One in whom everything is yea! It is a contrast to the other man in whom everything was nay. Man in the flesh is all nay, and sometimes there is a mixture of the two in us: sometimes there is a bit of Christ and a bit of man in the flesh; that is mixing up yea and nay. The character of the work of God in the saints is that they become marked in all their ways by the stability that is in Christ; there is nothing doubtful about them. We have just sung a line of a hymn, 'Doubtful no promises remain'. God's promises never were doubtful! Why not say, 'Faithful God's promises remain'? They were always faithful and they have been verified in the fullest way in Christ. He is the Yea of them. Christ is the first and the last. He was the starting point in the heart and mind of God from whom all promises flowed; He is the root and offspring of David; everything springs from Him. The promises were unfolded through many centuries, but in the mind of God Christ was the source of every one of them. Saints of old lived on promises, but now we see them all established or substantiated in Christ. And we have not only promises, but the revelation of the promises and God fully revealed in Christ.

TH Was the word to the serpent a kind of promise?

CAC Clearly so; and Adam and Eve could lay hold of it.

N Then we go on to Abraham. Christ is presented as Son of Abraham and Son of David.

CAC Yes, the key to the whole gospel in Matthew is that He is Son of David and Son of Abraham. He is seen as the true Solomon and the true Isaac in Matthew. The first twelve chapters show Him as the true Solomon, finishing with His rejection; and then what He is as the true Isaac is taken up in resurrection.

TH Could you explain that?

CAC The son of David is Solomon, and the son of Abraham is Isaac: Jesus is both in the gospel of Matthew. The promises to Abraham stand in contrast to all the confusion man has brought into the world as seen in Babel. Babel represents what the world has become in the hands of men, a scene of confusion. We see Babel now; men's tongues are confounded morally, not only grammatically; they cannot agree, cannot fit in with one another. God is going to adjust it all, and that by Christ.

In David we see the weakness of man, his inability to hold anything for God. David had come to that in his last words (2 Samuel 23); he says, "The ruler among men shall be just, Ruling in the fear of God; And he shall be as the light of the morning, like the rising of the sun, A morning without clouds; ... Although my house be not so before God" — that is, everything connected with himself was no good — "Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, Ordered in every way and sure; For this is all my salvation, and every desire". David looks away from all the weakness attaching to himself; he was dying, it was the extremity of weakness: everything was slipping through his fingers, but slipping into Christ's. It demonstrated the absolute weakness of man, but there is One, the true Son of David who can take it up with a strong hand and hold it for God. All through the millennium, as we read in Psalm 72 "men shall bless themselves in him", "His name shall endure for ever". It gives one such a sense of comfort and stability that we have come to a Person in whom everything is secure. What a wonderful thing it is to be firmly attached to that Person!

N How do you understand, "for glory to God by us"? (verse 20).

CAC God has been pleased to get the glory and praise of His ways through the saints; if He does not get it through us He will not get it at all. It is most important from God's side that we should have our hearts firmly attached to Christ, otherwise He will not get the praise and glory due to Him.

N Why is He not only the Yea but the Amen?

CAC He is the confirmation of all God's promises; they are affirmed and confirmed; there is nothing more to be added. We have the Alpha and the Omega; that includes every letter in the alphabet. All is out; God has nothing more to tell us about Christ or about Himself.

"Yea is in Him" . You will never through all eternity get a bit more light than has come out in Christ; and you will never find in heaven anything about God that has not shone out in Jesus. What a Person to study, is He not? "Yea is in Him". That is, the verification of all divine truth is in the Person of Christ. It is an immense thing to see that everything there is on the revelation side and so

the blessing side is in Him. If I want to know the character of my blessing as one called of God I have to look to Christ to see it. Christ is preached and all that is in Him is presented in grace to all men: every person in the world is welcome to take hold of it and possess it. We preach a Person, not only One who died (we could have nothing without that) but a living glory-crowned Man at the right hand of God in eternal and blessed acceptance. All that is there in Him is for every man. The thoughts of God in regard to every one of us are set forth in Christ; they are so great we do not take them in. I could say to any man 'God has shown you the most wonderful favour, He has provided you with a Lord and Head, and everything set forth in Him is for you'.

TH God falls back on sovereignty; not one of us, if left to ourselves, would accept the gospel.

CAC That is the only hope for us. If God had not wrought by His Spirit in us we should never have believed the good news. Here it is all looked at as the work of God: He has firmly attached us to Christ, has anointed us, has sealed us and has given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. It is all God's doing, and it is for the glory of God by us.

N What is the character of the anointing?

CAC God has brought us under the same anointing that Christ is under in heaven, so that we are firmly attached to a glorified Man in heaven by the same anointing. He has companions, and He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His companions: how remarkable that we share it! Unity is the effect of the anointing. If it is so fragrant to God, we should value it more. We are exhorted to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. If saints were really attached to Christ in the power of this anointing there would be unity in a blessed way; it is because there is not this firm attachment that we do not see unity. Attachment to Christ means detachment from self, and it is self in some form or other that spoils the endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit.

N Have you any thought as to the order in which these things — the anointing, the sealing and the earnest — are stated?

CAC The anointing would seem to stand here in relation to our being established in Christ or firmly attached to Him. Then the sealing would carry God's mark just as the blessed Lord did in everything He said and did, as we read, "him has the Father sealed, even God", John 6: 27. I think every word and act of the blessed Lord carried the Father's mark; all was done in the Spirit. So the saints in this way carry the mark of God by being linked up with a glorified Man in heaven. Finally by having the earnest of the Spirit we

participate even now in the joy of all that is still behind the scenes. Everything is yet below the horizon, but saints, as having the earnest of the Spirit, are in presence of things to come. The Spirit not only shows these things to us as pictures, but brings us samples; we taste the grapes of Eshcol. It would all come in with firm attachment to Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 1 (SECOND READING)

2 Corinthians 1:21,22

CAC It is evident that the gift of the Spirit is so great and viewed in Scripture in so many ways that the difficulty is to compass it at all. It must be so when a divine Person comes in and is pleased to take a place on man's side, indeed to dwell in men. The very fact that it is so shows what an entirely new footing everything stands on for God: we must begin with that, that everything stands for God on the footing of Christ, of His death, His resurrection and ascension. I think if we see that everything is on that new footing for God we shall begin to understand the possibility of the Spirit being given. I do not know if anyone could understand the possibility of it apart from those great realities.

Ques Do you connect what you are saying with verse 20?

CAC Yes, I think things are summed up there. All the promises of God are yea and amen in Jesus Christ, in the Son of God. In Him is the yea; He is the affirmation and substantiating of everything that is in the thought of God for man. It is of the greatest importance to see that God would have His people intelligently in the Spirit. There is no thought in Scripture or suggestion of people having the Spirit and not knowing it. To have the Spirit intelligently involves the understanding of the footing on which everything stands for God, and it supposes the activity of faith.

Rem Everything is viewed here from the standpoint of what we are in Christ Jesus.

CAC Yes, I think the saints are in Christ Jesus by the work of God. That is, a most wonderful operation of divine power has taken place in everyone who has been transferred in faith and affection from Adam to Christ; it is the work of God. There is a tremendous action of divine power, resulting in a company of persons in this world being transferred in faith and affection from Adam to Christ.

All the promises subsist in the Son of God; there is no yea and nay, no uncertainty, nothing in a provisional way; it is all yea in Him. If you think of man after the flesh, the first man, he was always nay; he was the negation of everything in the will of God. If you look at him in innocence, he was corruptible; if you see him fallen, every kind of evil has place with him; if you see him under government, under the promises, under the law, in the presence of the divine testimony of the prophets, in the presence of Christ, and in the presence of the Holy Spirit, he is a negation. Now you turn to another Man — all this is presented in the gospel, it is not advanced truth —

God has established everything for His own pleasure in Christ. If you have faith in that Man who is risen, ascended and glorified in heaven, you receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit. If people have not faith in Christ risen and glorified how can they receive the Spirit? He is preached in order that men may be transferred in faith and affection from Adam to Christ; then God gives the Spirit. The Spirit is given in relation to all that God has brought in and established for Himself in a risen and glorified Man; there is no other footing on which the Spirit could be given. Therefore the faith that secures the Spirit is faith in a risen and glorified Man.

God never withholds the Spirit a minute longer than is necessary. God is the giving God; that is exactly the character in which He is set before us by His blessed Son. God is the Giver, and what does He give? He gives the Spirit. In John 4 it is not that He gives His Son, but that He gives the Spirit: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink". Who was it? The Son of God. What does He give? He gives the Spirit. "Thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water". That is the immense thought which was welling up in the heart of God in regard of man — He gives him His Spirit.

Ques What is your thought as to the anointing in connection with the gift of the Spirit?

CAC If we have faith in that glorified Man in heaven, and affection for Him, all is maintained in the power of the anointing now. God makes a choice of a man to be a priest, and He makes choice of another man to be a king; and when God has called a man to any position He has him anointed so that he may hold the position that God has given him in divine capability. That is the idea of the anointing as I understand it. We do not simply hold faith in Christ Jesus and affection for Him in a way that is apart from the Spirit, but we hold it in the power of the anointing.

Ques Is John 4 an initial or final thought?

CAC If you speak experimentally, I doubt whether we begin with John 4. I think the starting point on our side is that the Spirit is given to shed the love of God abroad in our hearts.

No scripture defines how we receive the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is presented in different ways; no two Scriptures present it in exactly the same way. The Spirit is introduced in the simplest way in Romans 5 after speaking of believing on God as having raised up the Lord Jesus. I have been condemned sometimes for saying that faith in Christ risen is essential to the gift of the Spirit, but I believe it is a divine truth. You must have faith in God who has

raised Jesus, that One who was delivered for your offences and raised for your justification. "Therefore having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have also access by faith into this favour in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God". Then the love of God is brought in: "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" — we find the Spirit is there. It is not supposed that a soul should have faith in God as having raised up the Lord Jesus and not have the Spirit. There is the wonderful display that God has made of Himself in declaring His righteousness and power and love, and all is gathered up now in a risen Man; all that was displayed in the cross and resurrection subsists before God in a risen Man. There is the profound sense in the heart of the love of God poured out there; it is an unmistakable experience. We learn the love of God in the death of Christ, and a risen Christ is our righteousness.

There was no Spirit here indwelling, except in Christ, until Christ had been ten days at the right hand of God. When the Lord was here He did for His disciples a great deal that was subsequently the work of the Spirit, because there was a divine Person here in flesh. The presence of that divine Person effectuated great things for the disciples.

Acts 19 shows that in the divine mind the presence of the Spirit is a conscious reality, not merely something read about in Scripture. Paul could say, "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye had believed?" We must pass to Romans 8 for a wonderful unfolding of the presence of the Spirit: you find that the christian is being set up there with the Spirit as power; it answers to the anointing, it is the Spirit of the anointed One. When we come to our side things are very feeble, but it is a great thing to understand what is there for us. I think that the presence of the Spirit for many saints is a thing they have hardly thought about and they are somewhat in the position of a man who owns a very impoverished estate which yields him small joy and revenue till one day he makes the discovery that there is a wealthy gold mine on his estate and all he has to do is to work it out. The presence of the Spirit is like that. We have a most wonderful resource of divine wealth and sufficiency in having the Spirit; now the thing is to give attention to the gold mine on our property and work it out and live on the wealth of it. It is like the woman in Elisha's time who paid her debts with the oil and lived on the rest. So great a thing could not be brought about but by the Son of God coming here: He is introduced at the beginning of the gospels as the One who would immerse us in the Holy Spirit.

The assembly is the anointed vessel; the expression is used in 1 Corinthians 12: 12, "so also is the Christ". The assembly is now the anointed vessel of

divine pleasure in this world. Some of us have been seeing lately how important it is that the presence of the Spirit should come into manifestation: that is the point in 1 Corinthians 12, which is concerned with spiritual manifestations. There are great diversities in distributions but all make manifest that the Spirit is here. The great exercise for us is that the presence of the Spirit should come into manifestation.

Ques Have we to dig for it?

CAC Yes, the nobles dug the well. That is the great importance of prayer; the Lord connects the gift of the Spirit with prayer. The Lord Himself was praying when He was anointed and sealed; the anointing and the sealing came upon a praying Man. No one can be anointed or sealed apart from prayer. Do you think God could anoint an independent or lawless man? It is impossible — “Upon man’s flesh shall it not be poured”, Exodus 30: 32. The Lord puts the woman in John 4 on that line — “thou wouldest have asked”. So in another scripture He speaks of the Father who is in heaven giving the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him. In that connection it is striking that it was after ten days of prayer that the Spirit came at Pentecost. A people who knew the company of a risen Man for forty days were content to stay in an upper room in prayer, and to abide in that upper room; they were not only meeting there but they stayed there, withdrawn from the world. You can see in Acts 1 the suitability of the company to be anointed. Also when Cornelius received the Spirit, it was very quickly; Peter had only started to speak, as he says, “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them”. It seemed a very easy thing but the angel said to Cornelius, “Thy prayers ... have gone up”. How long had he prayed? We do not know, but it was a praying man who received the Spirit.

There is no single defined way in which people receive the Spirit; it is presented from many different aspects in Scripture. It is spoken of in connection with prayer; with obedience — “the Holy Spirit ... which God has given to those that obey him”; in connection with love — “If ye love me ... I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter”; in connection with heart purity — Cornelius is an instance of a gentile receiving the Spirit in connection with heart purity: “The heart-knowing God bore them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit as to us also”, Acts 15: 8. No one receives the Spirit without purity of heart: the heart-knowing God is the only One who knows when people have turned from themselves to Christ. The Spirit is the witness to Christ and to the value of the death of Christ and also to the state of people’s hearts. It is God who purges the heart; you do not do it yourself: “having purified their hearts by faith”. God, in introducing faith, brought here all the elements of divine purity: we have a risen and glorified Man as the

object of faith and love. It is surely a purified heart which has that object for its trust and love; no heart is purified apart from that. It is a great thing for us to get an impression of subsisting realities; then we are boards of acacia wood fit for covering with gold. There is no idea in Scripture of the Spirit being given to people in an unsuitable condition.

Rem It was a very interesting company in Cornelius' house.

CAC Yes, they were all praying men. It is delightful to see the sort of men that Cornelius had about him. One is said to have been a pious soldier. What a lovely set of people they were, suitable for the Spirit! There must be something for God to put His Spirit on; He does not put It on flesh. "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured".

I think prayer is a wonderful thing: there is nothing that gives God more pleasure than prayer. It is so foreign to the first man, because prayer involves the subjection of the will to God. You cannot pray as long as the will is active; you may try, but the heavens are brass over the head of a person in whom the will is active. I think Cornelius' friends were like-minded with himself — they were all "before God".

On the divine side there are no time limits to receiving the Spirit. God can effect in one minute what in other cases takes forty years. The boards of the tabernacle were made of acacia wood; it is called incorruptible wood, a kind of material suitable to be overlaid with gold. When God can look into a heart and see it centring on His blessed Son, there is material there on which God can put the gold; and He puts it on in order that what He is may come into expression in His saints.

Ques Is this all the anointing?

CAC Yes, but it partly runs into the sealing. It is obvious that a sealed person carries God's mark; that is the primary idea of sealing. When we come to our side of it we have to remember how partial and fragmentary things are: we have to be continually enlarged and expanded to get an intelligent apprehension of it; we do not get it in a moment. It is the work of a lifetime to open out the different ways in which the Spirit acts; it is an infinite subject. It is not a thing to be dismissed by saying, 'I have received the Spirit', as though that were the end of it. We have not touched a tithe of the wealth for us in the Spirit.

Ques What about the indwelling?

CAC That is a wonderful idea because both the sealing and the anointing are more external; the very expression implies something external, but in the

indwelling we have something within. The indwelling supposes that there are suitable conditions for the Spirit of God to take up His abode there, not as a visitant. In the Old Testament we see the Spirit as a divine Visitant, and it could not be otherwise because there were no conditions suitable for the indwelling of the Spirit. He could come upon this one and that one by certain acts of power, but there was no indwelling.

Ques Might we have the sealing and the anointing and not the indwelling?

CAC No. We have to learn these things as they are presented to us. If one has the Spirit, one has potentially everything connected with the Spirit, though one may not know anything about it practically and experimentally; therefore we need a reading like this to touch our hearts and produce a sense in them that we are not in the good of the Spirit and so we go to pray.

I think the earnest in the heart involves the indwelling; it is something within. The earnest is a wonderful thing because it makes the inheritance a reality at the present moment. The earnest of the inheritance is until the redemption of the acquired possession. The whole inheritance has not yet been redeemed but the earnest is substance out of it. If a saint has the earnest of the Spirit he not only has light as to the inheritance but he has the substance of it in his heart. It is one thing to have light and another to have the substance. If you acquire possession you are sitting down in the eternal tabernacles.

The Lord presents in Luke 16 the thought of being received into eternal tabernacles, contrasting it with all the responsible course in which the unjust steward was tested. It is a beautiful thought connected with the feast of tabernacles. It is like Ephesians 2; there you sit down in the eternal tabernacles. What a wonderful thing it is to be restful there! If we think of an Old Testament figure we think of branches of beautiful trees, palm branches and willows of the brook. Think of the luxuriance and shade and shelter of them! You sit down there in eternal tabernacles, and know of nothing that is going to intrude, As you sit there you trace the wonderful way the blessed God has brought you from Egypt to the scene of glory, to the brightness and blessedness and delight of His heart.

It is wonderful to be there and to think that the ways of God have brought you there. We have the earnest in the Spirit, we have the substance of the inheritance. We have no more substance than we have in the Spirit. We all know much; we have read the Bible and many books, but we have no more substance in our souls than what is put there by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the Spirit of grace and supplication, and the Spirit of God in a man is characterised by that. I suspect that if we gave ourselves more to prayer we

should be astonished at the extraordinary activities of the Spirit that would follow.

Then there is another thing which we must not leave out. It is one thing to acquire the substance of the inheritance, but there is another very marvellous thought of the Spirit and that is that He is here to glorify Christ. What kind of desire has God put in our hearts? Apart from the thought of our personal blessing there is something deeper and more soul-stirring and precious, that we should be here as vessels of the Spirit for the glorifying of Christ, that the eternal Lover of our souls should be honoured and glorified in this world. The Spirit is here to maintain the testimony of the Christ. We have to furnish oil for the light; the supply of oil depends on us.

Ques Would glorifying Christ be giving an expression of what Christ is?

CAC Yes, and there should be the witness here, the collective witness to Christ, because the glory of Christ is being maintained in the witness and God would in these last moments give a peculiar power to the witness. In Leviticus 24 we have the candlestick in connection with the day of apostasy. In Exodus 25 God has told us about it in the day in which things were inaugurated; but in Leviticus 24 the candlestick is seen in the day of apostasy when the man blasphemed the Name. In that day it was to be the jealous care of the priests to see that the lamp burned undimmed. As place is given to the Spirit one would be enabled to be here in power, established in Christ, anointed and sealed, and having the earnest; that would qualify us for assembly conditions and the collective witness to the glory of Christ, so that every one becomes concerned that nothing should interfere with the shining forth of the testimony of the Christ. At Corinth the testimony was there, the candlestick was there and its vessels but the light burned very dim, and the object of the epistle was that the light should burn in all its brilliancy. That is the great exercise for us; it takes us from our personal side of things to think of the wonderful witness of the Spirit to Christ. How we should long for it in the ministry, in the preaching of the gospel and in all the gatherings of the saints that there should be a distinct manifestation of the Spirit's power glorifying Christ in this world. We are supplied through prayer; there is an immense source of supply, an inexhaustible reservoir in heaven; and the golden pipes are there, furnished with oil. What a result there should be in ministry! Look at Paul in prison! Look at the epistles to the Colossians, Ephesians and Philippians! What a rich ministry of Christ!

We learn what God is doing, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit", Zechariah 4: 6. As we give place to the Spirit we find the Headstone brought in with shoutings; Christ as Head gets His place as we give place to the Spirit.

He glorifies Christ and Christ comes in as Head and everyone says, "Grace, grace unto it!"

Ques Is all that the result of the indwelling?

CAC Yes, it is connected with it; it is the working out in result of these different aspects of the Spirit; they all have to be blended in the soul, and blended in the saints, because the distribution of the Spirit is spread over the whole body. We are not individually adequate for it, and even the saints we walk with are not; it is spread over the whole body.

Rem The baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost involves all this.

CAC Yes, it involved the whole thing right through; it is a universal idea, because all, whether Jews or Greeks, have been baptised into one body and have all been given to drink of one Spirit. That is the external and the internal. The body as looked at in Corinthians is the external exhibition of the presence of the Spirit; it is looked at as a vessel in which the presence of the Spirit becomes manifest. As each individual carries out his distribution the unity of all comes into evidence; therefore it is quite impossible that what is of the Spirit in me should clash with what is of the Spirit in you. The Spirit is dwelling in thousands of saints all contributing in various ways, but in perfect unity and harmony. By the Spirit we are all baptised into one body; it is the practical presentation of it. Then we drink of one Spirit; that is internal.

We enjoy in our own souls first what we manifest in the body.

Ques Should we drink continually?

CAC I think in principle we have all been given to drink of one Spirit. There is no doubt that the allusion there is to the bread and cup. The body is connected with the bread, and the cup is connected with drinking into divine love. We are all made to drink of one Spirit; you have not one source of joy and I another. How far have we drunk into the one Spirit? So far as we have, we have come into joy. The thought there is not simply knowing the presence and active power of the Spirit in a unity that appears outwardly, but that every one has the inward joy of it in his own soul.

2 CORINTHIANS 2

2 Corinthians 2:1-17

CAC This is one of the most interesting and attractive chapters in this epistle; not because we get any unfolding of doctrine in it, but because we see so blessedly the working of divine affections in the heart of the apostle. We may learn Christ by observing the spirit and ways of His servant.

F You see tenderness and consideration on his part for others.

CAC Yes, the warmth, the tenderness and the delicacy of divine affection in the heart of a man is very beautiful: it is a precious unfolding of the sensibilities of Christ. Paul was animated by the Spirit of Christ. There had been many grievous disorders at Corinth, and the apostle was not willing to go back till all these had been removed. He did not stay away in a judicial spirit — as if he said, ‘You are so bad that I cannot come’ — but he stayed away in the spirit of love: he would not go till every occasion of grief had been removed. In a sense he had been obliged to grieve the Corinthians by what he wrote in the first epistle, but he was anxious that all that should be got rid of before he came, so that there should be nothing to hinder the common joy of himself and the saints at Corinth; he wanted to come in unhindered joy. He could tell them now what a sorrow it was to him to write the first letter; he did not tell them that when he wrote it. “Many tears” (verse 4), what an exhibition of the sensibilities of Christ! His heart was broken about their state. The proper christian state is that we are all ministers of joy to one another. Paul looked to have joy in the saints (verse 3); he would not come to have grief from them. What marks this chapter is the working of the Spirit of Christ to draw saints together when they had been divergent: the Corinthians and Paul had not been of one mind. There was great divergence in the first epistle but now we see them in accord, there are no jarring notes.

M Luke starts with joy and ends with it. What is joy the outcome of?

CAC It is the outcome of abiding in divine love. The Lord could speak of “My joy” — He kept the Father’s commandments and abode in His love. He did the Father’s will in everything; there was nothing in the blessed Lord to hinder the fulness of His joy in the Father’s love. If the flesh is not allowed and divine love is working, there is nothing to hinder joy. It is part of the fruit of the Spirit — love, joy, peace — that is the order.

The apostle had to write very severe things to the saints at Corinth, but he had not written that they might be grieved but that they might know the love he had very abundantly towards them. It was the action of love on his part,

and we may say on theirs too, because it was the divine nature in them that responded to the first epistle. It is very encouraging to see how God can recover even when there is a very sad state of things among His people. It did not take years and years to recover the Corinthians. Now they were in such accord with the apostle that what grieved him grieved them. In the first epistle they had not grieved; he had had to say, "I have already judged", and, "Ye are puffed up" (1 Corinthians 5: 2), but now they are brought into line. There had been such a working of God in them that instead of being puffed up there was the deepest self-judgment, and even the one who had been such a distress was in such repentance that there was a fear of his being swallowed up with grief! What a blessed thing to see that the one of whom Paul had said, "Remove the wicked person" was now in danger, by Satan getting an advantage, of being plunged into too much sorrow! It is beautiful to see the tender grace of Christ that, directly the man was broken, there was an open hand to show love to him: directly the barrier is down the love of Christ can flow freely. Barriers are always on our side, never on His. We see this all through Scripture. As soon as Isaiah said, "Woe unto me! for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips", then flew one of the seraphim with the coal from the altar (Isaiah 6:6). As soon as the prodigal said, "I have sinned", the Father ran to meet him; as soon as David said, "I have sinned against Jehovah", Nathan said, "Jehovah has also put away thy sin", 2 Samuel 12: 13. There was no long waiting. The Spirit of Christ would give us right sensibilities, so that we should know when it is the time to rebuke and when to assure a person of our love: there is a time for everything. The Corinthians had been tested as to whether they were in the Spirit of Christ — "To this end also I have written, that I might know, by putting you to the test, if as to everything ye are obedient". There is no more sure sign of the Spirit of Christ than obedience; He was the obedient One!

F Paul is regaining confidence in them.

CAC Very much so! They had answered to the test and, if we do, all is well. Look at the beautiful unfoldings of ministry that follow in this epistle: the new covenant, reconciliation, new creation. Now with the spirit of obedience it can all be opened up. "If ye be willing and hearken, ye shall eat the good of the land", Isaiah 1: 19. If we are obedient there is nothing to hinder the blessed ministration of Christ by the Spirit.

F In what way were they marked by obedience?

CAC They had been exercised by the first epistle, and it wrought in them and produced self-judgment so that they obeyed the commandment of the Lord; they cleared themselves of many things. The spirit of obedience marked them;

they were brought into line with the apostle. Satan had been working to get a breach between the apostle and the Corinthians, but they are brought into perfect harmony. In the first epistle he calls them to judge as he did, and now he calls on them to forgive. "To whom ye forgive anything, I also". What he did they did and what they did he did. All is in accord, and it results in the Person of Christ coming into evidence. What a most remarkable statement it is in verse 10! "It is for your sakes in the person of Christ". There was only one Person to be in evidence, though many individuals. Paul was in Macedonia and there was a large company at Corinth, but only one Person was to be in evidence, and that the Person of Christ. So there was to be the same spirit of forgiveness in Paul and in the Corinthians, and that was the Spirit of Christ. This is the way to get rid of all differences and disagreements — many individuals and one Person. In the world they say, So many people and so many minds; we say, So many people and one mind. The only Person to be in evidence is the Person of Christ. Sometimes each of us wants his own way. Suppose we all got on our knees and desired that only one Person was to be in evidence, and that Person Christ! What a difference it would make! It takes all the saints to set forth the Person of Christ. Paul wanted the Corinthians to set forth the one Person. Satan is against that; all his doings are to bring some other person into evidence, not Christ, and if he can succeed he has gained his point. The only way we can hold the ground for God in face of Satan is by every brother and every sister being exercised that only one Person should be in evidence, and that one Christ.

By the grace of God, there was to be only one Person in evidence; each, whether Paul or the Corinthians, was to present Christ. Satan had tried to make the Corinthians have a different judgment from Paul; if he had succeeded there would have been more persons in evidence than one. If you and I do not agree we bring two persons into evidence, but if we both walk and act and think in the Spirit of Christ there is only one Person in evidence.

There would be no divisions if there was only one mind among us. When the Corinthians allowed the Spirit of Christ to control them they were brought together, and there was only one Person in evidence. If it is otherwise we are not pleasing to God. A chapter like this is worthy of a great deal of meditation. We ought to seek to learn Christ and the way the Spirit of Christ works; this is the only way He works.

Then we find that the apostle could not go on with his work at Troas: "I had no rest". He was so concerned about the Corinthians that he could not go on preaching, and that was the Spirit of Christ. This is very remarkable; it did not look like being led in triumph! He had to go off to Macedonia so that he might

be a little nearer, and so that he could hear a week or two sooner how they were getting on. He went to meet Titus; he crossed the sea and travelled a considerable distance. It was the Spirit of Christ; it was the yearning of the heart of Christ over these beloved children. They had been in a bad state and he was yearning over them in the utmost tenderness, and God was over all leading him in triumph. The apostle had been brought very low. He speaks of God who comforts us in all our tribulation; and just at the time when he was low and could not go on with his work as an evangelist, God was bringing out Christ in him and leading him in triumph — not by his preaching, but by his sufferings. The natural man would have said that Paul did not triumph, that he ought to have had more courage and gone on with his work; but God was bringing out Christ in him. Christ was having a triumph, not Paul! What a triumph for Christ to have a man who so yearned over saints that he could not go on with his work. What a triumph to have such a man in this world who had the same love as Christ, not the same amount but the same character of love. The love of Christ never fails; He loves to the end, so there was a sweet odour of Christ about the apostle. Some would not believe, and it was an odour of death to them, but still a sweet odour of Christ to God; and to believers it was an odour of life. When it was not a question of preaching it was still a sweet odour of Christ. Paul said, as it were, 'I am chained to His chariot wheels, Christ is having a triumph, I am a poor captive gracing His triumph!' When a Roman general came back victorious to Rome from foreign lands, they awarded him a triumph; he drove through the streets with the great men he had captured chained to his chariot wheels. God was showing in Paul the graces, the perfections, the sweet odour of Christ whether it was in service or suffering.

M Is that only the apostle? Do we see it in our day?

CAC Well, we certainly see it in Scripture, and the Spirit of Christ has not changed. I think we see it come out in many ways — the spirit of meekness, obedience, grace. This is a chapter we should pray over; it shows the sweet odour of Christ; we see it in Paul and in the Corinthians, and God is looking to have it from us. "Who is sufficient for these things?". In the next chapter Paul tells us, "Our competency is of God" (verse 5). "Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ", Paul could say. God was putting him through many exercises, but His object was to bring out Christ in him; his sorrows about the Corinthians were used to bring out Christ. We think of triumph when all goes swimmingly, but very often the saints are put through trying circumstances and exhibit a spirit of meekness and of dependence on God. Well, that is Christ coming out; it is God leading them in triumph in the Christ. When we have least sense of triumph, God sees the greatest.

What a contrast the last verse of the chapter is! Many "make a trade of the word of God", handling divine things for their own advantage. It is like a dark shaded background of the picture which showed the beautiful Spirit of Christ. Many in the apostle's time were adulterating, spoiling the word of God; we are not "as the many", he says. We should have thought that in the early days there might have crept in one or two black sheep, but the apostle says, "many". It is people borrowing from others and retailing the word of God, getting it from wholesale dealers and selling it cheap as if it were their own! We need to beware of this, of getting divine things second-hand! A little bit of our own is better than what we can get second-hand. The danger is that we have an idea in our heads and think we have the reality, but nothing is any use till we make it our own. If we are trafficking in truth, getting ideas and terms and phrases from others and not getting the truth for ourselves, it is most reprehensible. What we need is to get things for ourselves, not second-hand; we ought to pray about this when truth is ministered, and say, 'O God, make me to know it in my soul, make it good in me'. What is spoken of here shows the dark background against which the Spirit of Christ is seen in such lustre.

2 CORINTHIANS 3 (FIRST READING)

2 Corinthians 3:1-18

F Is this chapter connected with the sealing in chapter 1, verse 22?

CAC I think it would be the fruit of it. It is characteristic of the gospel that it is the ministration of the Spirit; and the writing on hearts is by the Spirit of the living God.

N Why does Paul speak so much about himself in this epistle? It is here, in chapter 5, in chapter 10 and at the close of the epistle.

CAC I suppose they were perhaps charging him with trying to put himself forward. He did not need any letter of commendation at Corinth. If a brother came to a place where all those breaking bread were his converts it would be strange if he needed a letter of commendation.

N He could point to the Corinthians as his work; they were written in his heart, if in none other.

CAC It is much in keeping with the previous chapter; the affections and sensibilities of Christ come out in the apostle's heart. But more than that, they were known and read of all men.

F Is not that the result of Paul's ministry?

CAC Yes; he says — "ministered by us". He passes on then to the thought of the epistle of Christ. I suppose that is really a letter Christ has written; the Corinthian saints were the writing of Christ.

N Is it the expression of Christ seen in them?

CAC I rather thought it was the character of God that had been inscribed upon them, and that no one could have written but Christ. You can recognise a man's writing! We recognise Christ's writing in them. The great point here is that Christ brings into evidence all that God is, and He takes up saints to make them tables of testimony. These tables do not express what man should be for God, but what God is for man, and no one could write them but Christ. He stooped down once to write that in the dust of death. Only once do we read of His writing — in John 8:6 - 8. His stooping to write was a twice repeated figure of His coming down from heaven to write the love of God in the dust of death, and that was the cross; it was written there. He stooped to write all the revelation of God's love to men. He says to us, 'I have stooped from the glory to write the story of God's love'; now from the glory He takes up Paul, as a pen, to write in human hearts the same thing that was written in the cross.

Others could write epistles, but the finest epistle of all is the living epistle of Christ, and every saint is a page or verse of it. The most wonderful epistle of all is the saints.

N The devil had no answer to that; he can cavil at John's or Paul's epistle, but there is no cavilling at Christ's.

CAC It is the light of divine love; love has come in as light. We put light and love as if they were a contrast, but the light that shone in Jesus is the light of divine love:

'The light of love has shone in Thee,
And in that love our souls are free'.

That is the end of the chapter; no one is free till he knows the end of this chapter. It is wonderful to think of all that was concentrated in the death of Christ; all the telling out of divine love is now written in myriads of hearts from the glory by the same Person who wrote it in the dust of death. These Corinthians were the setting of it forth. We see in 2 Corinthians that Christ is Writer and Speaker. He is Writer here: "Ye are ... Christ's epistle" — and in the last chapter He is the Speaker: "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me". It was Christ who spoke in the apostle and Christ who wrote using the apostle as a pen to write on the fleshy tables of the heart. So that what is in view is a divine work; it must be so from the beginning because no one but God could give man a heart of flesh. A fleshy table is a soft impressionable material, but man's heart is naturally a stone and nothing impresses him unless God gives him a fleshy heart.

N Is the writing like that of an indelible pencil?

CAC Yes, every mark in the soul made in the power of the Spirit is indelible. The tables are divinely prepared and the writing is there; nothing can ever erase it; it lasts for eternity.

N Would you say the new covenant is written in letters on Israel's heart and in spirit on ours?

CAC It is the love of God that is written. God will cause Israel to delight to do His will; the very spirit of the covenant is the knowledge of God, the spring from which it all flows — "they shall all know me". They delight to do His will because they know and love Him. It is not the letter of the new covenant with us but the spirit; the letter only kills.

M Will you explain how the letter kills?

CAC The letter of the covenant is outside of man and condemns him because he is such a contrast to it. If you take the letter of the gospel, it only kills a man because it exposes his terrible state. If you tell him that God is love and that Christ has died for him, it only shows what a contrast he is: he is not love, he is just the opposite, so it condemns him. Christ was the true neighbour; He says, "Go and do *thou* likewise". If man tries to do as Christ did, it kills him. "The commandment having come ... but I died", Romans 7: 9. But how wonderful it is when the Spirit is put in the heart! The apostle had not ministered the letter but the spirit of the new covenant: all his ways and manner of life were imbued with the spirit of the gospel. If asked if they had *heard* the gospel, they could have said, 'Yes, and *seen* it, too'.

Last week we were seeing how the apostle was imbued with the very spirit of Christ; it is the Spirit that gives life. There are tens of thousands in England who know the letter of the gospel and are not converted. Well, it will only condemn them; their hearts have never been touched and subdued by it. When the heart is touched by the Spirit, a man is subdued; there is an inlet for the love of God into his heart.

N Was the writing of Christ Paul's confidence?

CAC His confidence was that a divine work had been effected in them: he had no sufficiency, not even an apostle had for such a work as this, but his confidence was that this divine work had really been effected in them.

N It is a marvellous change from what he had to say to them in 1 Corinthians.

CAC Yes; there is no life seen there, but their sensibilities showed that there *was* life. We find by the second epistle that they had sensibilities, and when touched they were sensitive. If there is no sensitiveness you can not do anything. People try by talking and persuading to do something, but you cannot if there are no sensibilities.

The effect of the first epistle showed the Corinthians were sensitive and could be acted on. There was a quickened company; they proved it by their sensitiveness to the first epistle.

Many believers do not think of the side of the gospel that comes out here, the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness. It is a ministry that serves out the Spirit to man. God serves out His Spirit to man. Just as the law served out death and condemnation, so new covenant ministry serves out the Spirit and righteousness. Christians do not often think of this, that God is dealing out His Spirit to men. It is *the* great reason for which the gospel is preached; those who preach are ministering the Spirit to men, as we read in Galatians 3: 5, "He therefore who ministers to you the Spirit". There had been those amongst

them who ministered the Spirit. It is the conferring of the Spirit on men; we get it even in Proverbs 1:23: "I will pour forth my spirit unto you, I will make known to you my words". That is the order of the new covenant: we get wisdom's Spirit so that we may understand wisdom's words; that is, we begin with the Spirit and then we understand the words. So that the first thing served out to men is the Spirit of God. People think a good deal about the forgiveness of sins; they can understand how that is served out in the gospel, but they lose sight of the Spirit. No one has forgiveness consciously till he has the Spirit; the consciousness of forgiveness is in the Spirit, so the ministration of the Spirit comes first here and then the ministration of righteousness, which corresponds with forgiveness and justification, but we must have the Spirit to be conscious of it. A great many people try to get at the joy of forgiveness by the letter, by what Scripture says, but it is by having the Spirit that we get the joy and consciousness of it. Everyone in the Church of England says in the apostles' creed, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins'; they have it in the letter but not in the Spirit. Christendom ignores the Spirit: christians do not dishonour Christ half as much as they dishonour the Spirit; that is the sin of christendom. I once searched to see what is the first thing man gets in the New Testament. It is the Spirit. In Matthew 3 it is the first thing spoken of as being conferred on man. The great object of the gospel being administered is that saints may receive the Spirit, and that is the side overlooked. I have had great opportunity of listening to the gospel for the last fifteen years, and have carefully observed it and noticed that the essential blessing of the gospel is rarely presented. What is presented in Scripture as the greatest blessing is little alluded to in the preaching of the gospel today.

N Peter and Paul did not always mention the Spirit, but their preaching made room for it.

CAC They served out the Spirit, and that is the character of new covenant ministry; it ministers the Spirit and righteousness, and it is because of those that you get life and quickening.

N Is this a subject for the gospel?

CAC I think it is a fine subject for the gospel. I do not know why what was preached on the housetops in early days should be hidden from men today! Peter said, "Repent ... and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God may call" Acts 2: 38, 39. Why should what Peter presented so fully and clearly be hidden now? Many would be greatly interested; would it not affect a man greatly to think he might have the Spirit of God? He would say, 'Is it possible for a sinner like me to have the Spirit? I never heard

anything like that before'. It is a denial of the gospel if you think you have to work up to the Spirit: in the new covenant the Spirit is served out. The law served out death and condemnation; everyone who came under it was condemned; but the new covenant serves out the Spirit to be a vital spring in the souls of men. The Lord spoke of it to the sinful woman at the well (John 4) — "He would have given thee living water ... whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever, but the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life", John 4: 10, 14. The Lord is just telling her the very thing.

N But is not this ministry for saints?

CAC No doubt people who have hearts of flesh are the only ones who can appreciate it; but there is a divine work going on and there are people all around who are subjects of it, who have hearts of flesh and are impressionable. These are the people who can receive new covenant ministry. Many of us might be content with the letter of it. I do not know anything more humbling than to challenge my soul as to how far I have received this ministry; how much have I got in my soul in the power of the Spirit of God? How much have we got in quickening power? It is an exercise for us all.

F. How does it begin?

CAC God begins. He makes the heart into a heart of flesh and man is exercised. God tells him of the Person and the work of Christ, and of the forgiveness of sins, and of the gift of the Spirit; he receives the Spirit and It becomes a living spring. He has got what is living and it can be added to. It can grow and expand. Nothing counts for God but what is living; He is the living God. It is the "Spirit of the living God" that we have. The new covenant is connected with quickening power. In Psalm 119 quickening is spoken of a good many times; it shows that things are made living. It is not only the letter of the law but the living character; the spirit of it is there. In connection with it God promised to pour out His Spirit.

Scripture has said, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water". There is a shade of difference each time the quickening is mentioned in Psalm 119; each time it applies to something different. I commend it to everyone to read and look up the different connections.

It is a wonderful chapter that we are reading tonight! It is the Lord that quickens, and the Spirit. It all begins with the serving out of the Spirit. It is an immense thing to look at it from the divine side. Why did God send His Son into the world? The end was that men might have the Spirit. Redemption was effected for that and now the gospel is sent out with the object in view that

men might have the Spirit. God is not holding It back. People say, Have I got It? The cure for that is to see what God is doing; He is delighting to give the Spirit. Jesus came down and died, and He went up and is glorified. His coming down and going up was all in order that God might give the Spirit. In Acts 10 while Peter was yet speaking the Spirit fell on them all, showing in what a hurry God was to give the Spirit. As soon as souls turn to Christ the Spirit is given. People often speak as if they longed for the Spirit and God would not give it to them; they say, 'I want to have It and I have been praying about it'. That is a slur on God, for there is nothing He so delights in as to give His Spirit. It is His longing and His joy to receive the cry of "Abba Father", and He cannot get it unless He gives His Spirit. People will not believe the gospel; they will do anything rather than believe it! The new covenant is dependent on the presence of the Spirit to be understood and responded to.

How can men know the love of God? Only by the Spirit shedding abroad the love of God in their hearts. John 3: 16 is not of practical value to a man without the Spirit. I remember what a comfort it was to me at one time; it made me feel I should not go to hell! But I did not touch the love of God till I got the Spirit. Many read that verse, a beautiful word, and they get comfort out of it, but they do not get the spring of it till the Spirit pours out the love of God; then the spring of it is in our hearts and we can enjoy it a thousand times more than before.

F Does not the word quicken?

CAC We are quickened "according to thy word". The word is there and God quickens us according to it, but response is by the Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS 3 (SECOND READING)

2 Corinthians 3:1-18

Ques Is the writing mentioned here by the Spirit?

CAC One feels, perhaps, that we have not sufficiently given place to the Spirit in connection with the new covenant.

Ques What is the importance of the Spirit?

CAC I suppose as furnishing the subjective conditions which enable covenant relations to be taken up intelligently and affectionately so that we become pleasurable to God.

Ques Is that the result of the writing of the living God?

CAC That has a very essential part in it. I thought that the saints had come under the hand of Christ to be written on so that they become tables of the covenant. The covenant finds expression in the saints.

Ques Is that in contrast with the tables of stone?

CAC It strikes me in reading this chapter that it is very difficult to separate divine Persons, because there is no doubt that the covenant is consummated by God. It is Jehovah who said that He consummated a new covenant;

He does it mediatorially by Christ so that Christ is identified with God, and then we find He is identified with the Spirit too. This chapter gives a wonderful thought of unity; divine Persons are operating to bring about conditions in the saints that will be entirely pleasurable to God.

The Spirit is prominent in chapter 3.

HB I was going to ask what part the Spirit has? It says that the Lord is the Spirit. Christ is Mediator and then the Spirit is brought in, and then we get the ministry of the Spirit.

CAC That is very important. It seems to me that to connect the Spirit with it gives the thought of new covenant ministry a permanent place in the assembly. It is not a once for all ministry; the ministry of the new covenant was not what converted the Corinthians; it was not what they began with.

JB It is a continuous ministry throughout the dispensation.

CAC What we look for is ministry of a glorious character which is to be maintained in divine power in the assembly and which promotes the service of God in a wonderful way.

LM When the Lord was here He wrote upon the ground; now we have a divine Person come in who writes on the fleshy tables of the hearts of the saints.

CAC The living activities of God are in question; it is the Spirit of the living God. The fact that it is the living God gives vitality and permanence to it. The ministry of the Spirit gives character to the whole period.

It is a period marked by what is glorious and excellent, and divine Persons are concerned in it, so you find it difficult to draw any line between divine Persons in this chapter. It belongs to the truth that we are made conscious in our meetings for worship and service that we worship God as known in the Trinity; it belongs to the ministry of the new covenant. It is to give character to the worship of the assembly. Therefore the point is that something is effected by the Spirit of the living God; something is written on the fleshy tables of the hearts of the saints; something is written indelibly. The whole ministry of the Spirit can be presented to the saints with the assurance that there is a condition of heart that will answer to it. There is additional material secured as tables but they are looked at as complete at any particular time; the tables are never incomplete and they remain.

LM What is God's workmanship by the Spirit?

CAC Christ is the Writer, and the saints being the epistle of Christ are the evidence and manifestation of the divine writing. It shows how Christ is identified with God. The thought in the Old Testament is God writing; in the New Testament it is actually Christ. Though it is God's writing the mediatorial activity is that of Christ.

J.B. The finger of God?

CAC It is God personally but suggests the mediatorial idea; God does it. The Spirit of God would deepen in our souls the sense of Christ as in Deity. What is so wonderful is the mediatorial idea as seen in Christ, though it is not so wonderful, perhaps, as to see it in Paul. Paul becomes the instrument in the hand of Christ for divine writing; it is the mediatorial idea carried a step down; Paul is the pen. The Spirit of the living God is connected with something written in the hearts of the saints, and brings what is divine into the hearts of the saints.

JB It makes us desire an impression of heart.

CAC Yes, indeed. There can be something in human hearts that is positively divine in character; every mark that is made is made by the living God. There is something in the human heart that corresponds in quality and power to what is in the heart of God. The hearts of the saints are put into

correspondence with the heart of the living God. Could you think of anything greater than my heart as the subject of divine writing being in correspondence with the heart of God? The ministry is continually going on. We dwell in God and God in us; that is John's way of putting the covenant. We have such a restricted idea of the covenant. The place of the Spirit in the covenant is very important, so I am very thankful we have read this chapter. The Lord's supper is very great because it sets before us the immense results of the incarnation, that is the great point in the Supper.

LM In that way Christ is not a dead letter but a living epistle in the saints. That is even more than Scripture.

CAC Yes, it is. The Spirit is greater than the Scriptures because He inspired them all. A great deal lies in the intelligence of the Spirit that has never been put into Scripture. The Spirit is a divine Person, and He is the vitality of things. The Scriptures without the Spirit are like the body without the soul.

HB Would you say a word as to the expression, "the Lord is the Spirit"? Leaving out the parenthesis it reads, "who has also made us competent, as ministers of the new covenant; not of letter, but of spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens ... Now the Lord is the Spirit".

CAC It is to show us that you cannot have one divine Person without something of the virtue of all. When the Lord was here the Father and the Spirit were here. You cannot think of the Lord in any other way than that He was in the unity of the Godhead all the time. It confirms us in the truth of the Trinity. There is one God; that needs to be known in our souls, but it is God known in three Persons. It is a mystery but it is known to faith and love. The Lord can be identified with the Spirit; the Lord is the Spirit. The Spirit quickens, not the letter, not even the letter of the New Testament quickens. It is the Spirit who quickens; there is no vitality in the letter itself.

LM What a fine company the saints would be as sitting together as quickened! Paul linked Timothy and Silvanus with himself.

CAC Paul loved to link others with himself. Because the character of his ministry was to be worked out in the assembly he loved to put others with himself. Though he had the ministry yet he liked to identify others with himself.

LM Is it possible for us to be linked with Paul?

CAC I thought so — if any are competent for this ministry, for it is entirely of God. The vessel of it was a human vessel, but the ministry and the competency for it are entirely divine. That separates us from human thoughts

and theology and everything about us in the religious world. We come to a new character of things where all is divine. In the assembly there is no competency to take up the new covenant except in the power of God; it is a spiritual realm. There is the attaching of saints to Christ, the anointing, the sealing and the earnest; that is all to supply what is necessary for us so that we may come into this new and glorious system.

LM Even though the first covenant was introduced by glory, it now is surpassed by a greater glory altogether — indeed it is annulled. Therefore I suppose we can understand that the first covenant caused them to be afraid. In the new covenant, the nearer we get the brighter we find things.

CAC Yes. Therefore there is liberty; it is a system of liberty. We want that so that we can move happily in relation to God and the brethren. We are in perfect liberty outside the domain of the letter.

Ques “Not of letter, but of spirit”. What does that mean?

CAC Things are taken up in their vitality apart from the letter; it is spirit. It is very difficult to say whether there should be a small ‘s’ or a large one there. Paul goes on to say, “The Spirit quickens”; there you have evidently got a Person. Paul contrasts the two systems of things, not letter but spirit, but afterwards a divine Person is in view and he passes from the one thought to the other almost imperceptibly. As to our taking up things in spirit in contrast with the letter, we can only do it by the Holy Spirit; we only touch them in virtue of being quickened by the Holy Spirit who is a divine Person. Then you find the Lord is the Spirit so the Lord and the Spirit are identified; the Spirit that quickens is the Lord.

JB Why is there that designation, “the Lord”?

CAC I thought it was to enhance the dignity belonging to Him as Mediator of the new covenant.

LM There is authority with ‘Lord’.

CAC Yes, and all that is of God is set forth in the Lord.

HB What is the character of the fleshy tables in contrast with the tables of stone?

CAC The work of God beginning with new birth. The fleshy tables view the saints as subjects of divine work; this wonderful writing and ministry follow on that, and they go on. We want to make room on every occasion for the ministry of the Spirit.

LM If the covenant is known as we are looking at it here, there must be springs of love to God. It says, "If any one love God, *he* is known of him", 1 Corinthians 8: 3.

CAC Yes. We should come together to the Lord's supper in the liberty of that.

HB Does the ministry of the Spirit make me know what the saints are in God's thoughts?

CAC Yes. It liberates us when we get to divine thoughts and divine love. We have to look at the death of Christ as in the Supper as that which has inaugurated this glory system in which God shines. He is radiant in the face of Jesus and it is all founded on the value of His blood. There should not be any want of liberty in giving thanks for the cup for it introduces us to such radiant glory. In 1 Corinthians 12 we read, "For also in the power of one Spirit *we* have all been baptised into one body"; that refers to the loaf, but then we read, "and have all been given to drink of one Spirit"; that refers to the cup. It is as much as to say that all that is conveyed in the cup is not only what is expressed in the death of Christ but also all that is known in the power of the Spirit. We are all made to drink into one Spirit so there is perfect unity and liberty.

HB We are sometimes in a hurry to get away from the covenant.

CAC I think we should not hurry away from what the Lord suggests to us. The Lord distinctly gave us this cup and He said, "This do", and in giving us the cup He told us it was the new covenant in His blood poured out for us. Therefore if we reverence the Lord we ought not to be too quick in getting away from the thought of that. It is wonderful to think of what comes out in chapters 3 and 4 of this epistle. A better knowledge of God in the covenant would put substance and body into our worship to the Father as we move on; it would give stature to sons. Mostly the saints are 'small' sons and we only get stature in sonship through the covenant. It is as we know God that we get stature. We learn God in the covenant, so we should have more stature for sonship if we knew God better. You do not leave the Lord out, for you never forget that you only know God through the Lord; we only know Him through the Mediator.

LM It is only as in the good of the new covenant that we are able to address God freely.

CAC Yes.

LM That brings us into the presence of divine Persons and then we are led on from glory to glory.

CAC Yes. The Lord loves to link Himself with any right thought in relation to God; He loved to identify Himself with the repentant remnant, to be on their side, to be baptised. He said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness", Matthew 3: 15. The Lord loves to identify Himself with those who receive the knowledge of God; He loves to lead them on from the point they have reached. That brings in His headship. The Lord has great pleasure in coming to our side; on the mediatorial side He is on God's part, but when we have got the benefit of that there is something He can identify Himself with; He is attracted by what He finds there. When He comes He must be Leader; He leads us on as far as He can, as far as to Bethany in Luke 24. On any occasion the Lord will lead us as far as we can go; we cannot always reach to John 20. The marvel of all is that the Lord is the Spirit; that is the divine side. He is the quickening Spirit; the spiritual, vital relation to God has its origin in the Lord. We cannot separate between the Lord and the Spirit, but we read, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty". I feel I little enter into that. We have the Spirit of a divine Person who is identified with the Lord, so we cannot separate them. The same Spirit is in the saints and secures liberty, so that we move in relation to God in the same liberty in which the Lord Himself is. It is possible to withdraw into the region of the Spirit — to leave one's business, one's family and oneself and pass into the region of the Spirit. That is a spiritual possibility I should like to cultivate for myself. It is wonderful liberty! "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty". It is the same Spirit in Him and in the saints, so there is liberty on both sides, with Him to lead and with us to be led. Our meetings are strangely lacking in liberty often; we get into ruts and say the same things over and over again. If the Spirit put us in liberty it would give us freshness and variety even in what we say. Freshness in the affections leads to variety.

HB "My soul set me upon the chariots of my willing people", Song of Songs 6: 12.

CAC Quite so. What a delightful company for the Lord, a company quickened by Him! Something is written in their hearts by the Spirit of the living God and they are quickened and brought into this system of glory, and there is the ministry going on continually! All ministry in the Spirit tends to liberty. People say sometimes that we put the saints in bondage, but the truth always makes free. Nothing of God ever puts the saints in bondage.

Ques Is it an encouragement to surrender human resources?

CAC Yes, and give more place to the Spirit. If we all, brothers and sisters alike, knew that we are in the day of the Spirit, a wonderful period marked off

as the time when the Spirit dwells here, there is no limit to what the Spirit could do for us as we admit this and give it place with us.

LM Would Olivet be on the way to John 20?

CAC Surely. The Lord, in coming to a company He could lead, would always have in His mind the terminus. He might only be able to lead us as far as to Bethany, but He would always have in His mind the terminus, John 20. As having the Spirit of the Lord — there is a wonderful dignity and exaltation about that — there must be liberty, liberty to behold the glory of the Lord so that we are changed. We become unified with God's character and glory and become like it. What a company the assembly would be if this were entered into! There is more on the line of the covenant in Scripture than on the line of sonship. If we take account of the types, what a lot there is on the line of the covenant. There is an immense region opened up by the covenant; the covenant qualifies you to go into the land. The thought of the threshing floor and the wine press is in the covenant; the book that was sprinkled with blood was the book of the covenant; the Hebrew servant was in the covenant; the feasts were in the covenant and the covenant qualifies us for the land. There is a lot in the covenant; in the power of the: covenant you can take up the service of God in the land. The central point for worship in the land is the ark of the covenant. We get the temple too, but the centre is the ark of the covenant. The land is only enjoyed properly in the blessedness of the covenant. The covenant that was given at Horeb was in view of the land.

2 CORINTHIANS 3 (THIRD READING)

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

CAC Christians are very apt to connect the thought of glory with the future, but this chapter fills the present with glory.

A Does the glory begin here?

CAC Yes, I think glory marks the whole dispensation; it is a dispensation of glory. The dispensation of the law began with glory, but it did not subsist in glory; the glory did not abide. The christian dispensation not only begins in glory but it subsists in glory. It is striking that what is referred to in this chapter is not the first time that Moses went up the mount, but the second time. The first time he went up there was no glory in his face; he came down with the tables in his hand, but broke them at the foot of the mount when he saw the people's sin: he knew it was all over with them on the ground of pure law. The second time he goes up the mount he goes up as one who had found grace. It is remarkable that God had said to Moses, "Thou hast also found grace in mine eyes", Exodus 33: 12. Moses personally had found grace in the sight of the Lord, and he says, "Make me now to know thy way", and then further, "Let me, I pray thee, see thy glory". That is the glory that shone in his face, it was the reflection of God's glory. God had passed by and proclaimed Himself as merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, and that glory made Moses' face shine and made him a worshipper. "Moses made haste, and bowed his head to the earth and worshipped", Exodus 34: 8. Even God coming out and proclaiming His mercy and grace was a ministration of death because it did not minister anything for man. Moses personally learnt the way in which God's favour could be known; he learnt the meaning of the cleft in the rock. God had said, "I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand". Moses is hidden and God passes by. This is one of the most striking figures of the death of Christ in the Old Testament. Man is put out of sight and God is revealed; on the ground of that, Moses' face could shine. In figure it is the complete blotting out of all that that man was, and the shining out of all that God is. Still the public dispensation and government of God was one of law; the glory shone in connection with demands made on man, and therefore it was a ministry of death. The apostle in this chapter is seeking to bring out the glory of the present ways of God in grace, showing that the Spirit and righteousness are ministered to man. The law ministered nothing to man but condemnation and death, but the new covenant ministers the Spirit and righteousness, and it subsists in glory. It is just as glorious today as at Pentecost; there is not an atom of change. God

gives His Spirit just as much now as He did then and it is the same Spirit and the same righteousness. Saints may say what blessed times there were at Pentecost and how they would have liked to live in the times of the beginning of christianity, but there is no reason why we should not be as well off now as then, that is, inwardly, not outwardly.

A Have we not more light now?

CAC Yes. In those days they had much less light than has come out since. It is an immense thing to get hold of the fact that we belong to a system of glory and that we partake of its glory; nothing could be more glorious than to have the Spirit of God. There is no testimony to the value of redemption so great as the fact that the Spirit is given to those who believe. Everything is supplied now; there is no demand. The glory is a glory of grace. The Spirit and righteousness are the two great features of christianity. Righteousness is a much greater thing than justification: the latter has reference to offences, to what we have done, but righteousness is in contrast with sin, with all that we are. To put it simply, the ministry of righteousness means that I get rid of all I am, and get in exchange all that Christ is. What a wonderful exchange! That is what God is ministering now — a full Christ for an empty sinner; as has often been said, it is that or nothing now. God cannot give more. All that God can give us is wrapped up in Christ and the Spirit. There is no veil needed now. There was nothing ministered under the law, nothing brought to man then on God's part, so he could not bear to look at the glory. It is only when everything is ministered to us in grace that we can bear to look at the glory. The veil was put on Moses' face in mercy, because man could not bear the glory when it came connected with demand. The old covenant had a glory connected with demand, but the glory of the new covenant is connected with supply. God's object in sending out the gospel is that men might have the Spirit and have Christ as righteousness. If glory comes to me in the way of supply, the nearer I come to it, the more I look into it, the more I am enriched. The nearer I come to God, the more I look at His glory, the better off I am; it makes me a worshipper like Moses: he made haste and bowed his head and worshipped, and then his face shone. That is what we get in this chapter, the saints' faces shine. Not only is there glory in the Lord's face, but the saints are all seen reflecting that glory, and that is how they become tables of testimony. That is what the testimony is; if we are not shining we are not in God's testimony.

M Has the brazen serpent aspect of the death of Christ to do with righteousness?

CAC Yes, and immediately after the brazen serpent we get the springing well. If sin in the flesh is condemned in the cross of Christ, the Spirit can be given.

M Then they pitched towards the sun rising. Is that the dawn of an entirely new day?

CAC Yes. If you look at the map you will see that was the moment they turned to the land of promise. Before that they were going due south with their backs to the land, but they came to the brazen serpent and to the springing well, and then they pitched towards the sun rising, that was due east; they turned to the land, and they never turned their backs to it after. We get the brazen serpent in John 3, and the well in John 4 springing up into eternal life — that is very much like the land.

What remarkable terms are used here: in verse 8, "Shall not rather the ministry of the Spirit subsist in glory?"; in verse 9, "Much rather the ministry of righteousness abounds in glory"; in verse 10, "The surpassing glory"; and verse 11, "That which abides subsists in glory". What a system of glory! It gives us the key to Romans 8: 30, "Whom he has justified, these also he has glorified"; the saints are glorified now, glorified in having Christ and the Spirit. Why did He justify? In order that He might give us His Spirit; every one who has the Spirit and Christ is morally glorified.

M How is it that these things do not come out more in us?

CAC That is our great exercise, that they might be seen. People who have the Spirit and Christ ought to come out carrying the features of Christ and the Spirit.

We see how it is brought about in the last verse of the chapter, and it is "from glory to glory". Every step of the way is an ascending scale of glory: that is a good Pilgrim's Progress! It would be impossible to look at all this if we are entangled with what we are in the flesh, and do not know that we are clear of it by the cross and death of our Saviour; until then the veil is on our heart, there is that which hinders the perception of the glory. How could you bring what you are into this system of glory? One can hardly find words to express what we are in the flesh.

Bildad the Shuhite expresses it in a way that comes nearer the truth than anything I know. He says (Job 25:6) man is a worm; the word "worm" is literally 'maggot'.

That is the creature God has taken up to bring into this system of glory, and to have the Spirit and Christ. The glory of Christ becomes the personal wealth of the soul, so it can be said, "Whom he has justified, these also he has glorified".

The Spirit has been given to bring us in heart and mind into the glory system now. Paul says, "We use much boldness"; we have not got to cover anything up. If all that I am is not gone in the death of Christ, if every rag and stitch of self was not cleared away in the cross, I would be lost to all eternity, but now there is no need to hide anything; the more we come out into the full light of the glory of God, the better off we shall be.

A We are brought into a wealthy place.

CAC Yes, we get the wealthy place here, and it was all in view in the times of the old covenant; God had it in view. God always had an end in view, Christ and the Spirit. Scripture opens with that, the tree and the river are on the front page. All the Old Testament, even the law, is full of Christ and the Spirit in figure, but it was not known. "Unto this day the same veil remains in reading the old covenant, unremoved". They did not see Christ and the Spirit in the Old Testament, and many believers now fail to see Christ and the Spirit in the Scriptures; they read them in relation to themselves. They go to Scripture to find a comforting verse for themselves and they find it, of course, but they do not get the real good of Scripture. If I read Scripture with regard to myself the veil is on my heart, but if we read it with regard to Christ and to the Spirit we gain very much. Very often in reading it it is self that is before us, but the right way is to have Christ before us. The great themes of Scripture are Christ and the Spirit, and if we look for them we get the truest comfort; we get lifted up, but in another Man. God is not seeking to build me up as an individual apart from Christ. He seeks to build us up in Christ, and if we get more of Christ we are lifted up to be exalted in another Man. We are naturally self-centred; we have to learn to be Christ-centred. The true centre of Scripture is Christ. We are too much like the old astronomers; they believed the earth was the centre of the whole universe, and that the sun revolved round it, so all was in a muddle to them! If we read the Scriptures with self as a centre we miss the whole kernel; but if we see Christ is the centre we get things rightly adjusted. The Spirit is given as a bond of attachment to the centre, Christ, and then we are set in our right place and orbit.

To come into the blessing of all these things we have to turn to the Lord: when the heart of Israel "shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away". That sets forth a turning away from self; that is what turning to the Lord means, and then the veil is taken away. It will be a wonderful day for Israel when they turn to the Lord. You get their experience depicted in Job, which is a setting forth prophetically of God's ways with self-righteous Israel. Job learned to part with self. He had held on to it tight, "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go", Job 27: 6. It hindered him from seeing the glory; then he learns to

abhor himself and turns to the Lord and he is in liberty. Israel has had long centuries of self-righteousness, but the day will come when they abhor themselves and have the Lord as their righteousness. Then, as prophesied, they will have the Spirit, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground", Isaiah 44: 3. What will be their portion is ours now; they get it in a day of manifested glory, we get it now in a day when glory is known spiritually, not manifestly.

M "The heavens declare the glory of God" — is that because Christ is there?

CAC Yes, I think that is a just application of Psalm 19. The sun in the heavens is really Christ.

M "There is nothing hid from the heat thereof".

CAC Yes, verse 4 is quoted in Romans 10: 18 as referring to the gospel. It is wonderful how the Lord is the Spirit of all the Old Testament. We have to get built up in the letter of the Old Testament; then we find that the Lord is the Spirit of it and that every part of it testifies of Him. Then how wonderful it is that we should have the Spirit of the Lord! The Lord is the Spirit of all Scripture, but there is another thing, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty". Christians have the Spirit of a glorified Man in heaven as the Spirit of liberty. That does not mean liberty in the meeting but in soul. If we are all in liberty in our souls there will be liberty in the meetings. The kind of liberty that verse 17 has in view is enlarged on in verse 18. It is liberty to look on the glory of the Lord, liberty to be transformed according to the same image. Verse 18 is a very good and full description of christian liberty. There is not another chapter like this one; it brings out the glory of the new covenant and the true character of christian liberty.

F What does an unveiled face involve?

CAC That there is no veil on the glory of the Lord, in contrast with Moses. Moses had to veil his face because Israel could not look on the glory, but the Lord has no need to veil the glory because saints are able to look on it; the glory ministers everything to them, it does not demand. The unveiled face is on the Lord's side; it is He whose face is unveiled: "the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face" is the right translation. There is the full shining forth of all that God is in grace. We sometimes sing, 'Oh, the glory of the grace, shining in the Saviour's face'. That is blessedly true. He has a people in this world who have Him as their righteousness and who have His Spirit. If that is so, there is no need for a veil on His face. If He were not our righteousness and if we had not His Spirit, we could not bear to look at His face. No one can bear to look at the unveiled face of Jesus till he has Him for righteousness. I have Him instead of

self, and I have His Spirit; there is no need for Him to veil His face! So when we look at it, instead of being withered up as a natural man would be, we are transformed. If righteousness has been ministered to us and we have His Spirit, we are transformed from glory to glory. Instead of consuming fire it is a conforming power.

The apostle could speak with perfect liberty. He had the end in view that the saints should be here with shining faces; the glory of God in grace should be shining out in them. The only place where the world can see the glory of grace is in the saints; if they do not see it there they do not see it at all. Stephen was the most blessed illustration of this verse, "Having fixed his eyes on heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus", and he was transformed to the same image. He said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"; that is, he acted in exactly the same grace as Jesus; that was the shining out of the glory.

Jesus had said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". That is the glory of God; Stephen looked at it and reflected it. What an expression of grace! The spirit of divine grace is to express itself in us. If anyone persecutes you, you pray for him; if he reviles you, you bless him. That is the character of glory. Instead of showing the character of the devil or of a man in the flesh, we are to show the character of God. That is God's testimony, bound up in people who act like Him "This people have I formed for myself: they shall shew forth my praise", Isaiah 43: 21. These are people who show forth His grace. We might say, 'This is too blessed, it is all out of our reach', but there was one man who did it, Stephen, and if one man can do it, another can. The course of saints is normally on a progression of glory, an ascending scale. The new convert who has just learnt God in grace, expresses a little, and as he goes on to know a little more he expresses more grace; it is in a moral sense, of course. It is all accomplished by the Lord the Spirit, not by human effort; it is not attainment. It is not simply by the Lord, but by the Lord the Spirit; that is, it is not simply by having the Lord as an object; that is not sufficient.

People say you must have the Lord as an object — that is so, but not enough; it is the Lord the Spirit. It suggests the thought that the Spirit is there providing power in the saints subjectively. The wonderful thing is that we are one Spirit with the Lord; the very same Spirit that is in the glorified Man at God's right hand is in the saints down here and that is how any transformation is effected.

F Is that the same as, "As *he* is, *we* also are in this world", 1 John 4: 17?

CAC That would be the result. The result is that saints come out *as He is*. He is the righteous One, and the saints are righteous. If you read the epistle of John you will see that the characters that attached to the saints are the same

as those attached to Christ. If He is righteous, they are righteous; if He is holy, they are holy; and in that sense "as *he* is, *we* also are". It is the result of what we get in this chapter.

2 CORINTHIANS 4 (FIRST READING)

2 Corinthians 4:1-18

CAC There is enough in chapter 3 to keep us from fainting: "Having this ministry ... we faint not".

A Is that the ministry of the Spirit?

CAC Of the Spirit and righteousness. It is the wonderful system of supply that we have to do with, not a system of demand; everything is supplied; it is the character of new covenant ministry.

T The last verse of chapter 3 has a wonderful effect.

CAC Yes, in contrast to what was of old it gives marvellous elevation to the people of God. The law never proposed to make men like God but new covenant ministry transforms men into the likeness of God. When God comes out in grace it is that He may form a people to show forth His praise; He is working in grace so that His saints may carry the impression of all that He is.

T "God ... who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

CAC Yes, it all shone into the heart of the apostle so that it might shine out again and that we might be put into the shining of it. Christians connect the glory with the future but we were seeing last week that the present time is a time of glory. If we are not living in the light of present glory we are not in the light of christianity. There is the glory of God, the glory of Christ and the glory of having the Spirit; the ministry of the new covenant subsists in glory, abounds in glory, and there is the surpassing glory! Glory marks the present time; if glory will not make a person's face shine, I do not know what will!

T What do you understand by "from glory to glory"?

CAC That the course of the saints is progression; it goes from one step of glory to another; every step is a step in glory, and it is the glory of grace. It is all effected by the Lord and the Spirit.

T The apostle does not leave out mercy.

CAC The vessel is sustained by mercy; it is mercy that keeps us in a sense of glory; we are vessels for glory. Mercy takes account of the need on our side; God never loses sight of it. However blessed the character of the dispensation of grace and glory is, God always takes account of our real needs as described in verses 8 and 9, "every way afflicted, but not straitened; ... persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed". All this has to do with the

actual circumstances the vessel is in. We always have the sense of the earthen vessel: the more we are filled with the glory of the treasure, the more we shall be conscious of the earthen vessel. We could not touch the glory system unless we have mercy; we are not great enough for glory. It is lovely to see the two things brought together, mercy to support the earthen vessel, and the treasure put into it. Nothing is made of the earthen vessel but everything of the treasure. I heard of an old brother once who got so happy that he had to pray to the Lord to stop pouring in the blessing or else to enlarge the vessel. That is not often our experience. Still, one might feel the vessel could not hold any more; one may have a sense that the blessing is so great that there is not room enough to receive it (Malachi 3: 10). We can sing, 'Ah, Lord, enlarge our scanty thought, To know the wonders Thou hast wrought'.

We find in verse 2 the exercise of the apostle that whatever was inconsistent with this glory system was to be set aside; he says, "we have rejected the hidden things of shame"; they were not in keeping with the glory. The ways of a servant are to be in keeping with what he ministers; people could never have rejected the teaching of Paul on the ground of inconsistency in the preacher. T. That was the fruit of mercy.

CAC And of being transformed — Paul was a transformed man; he went down to Damascus like a lion and came back like a lamb.

There is nothing veiled on God's side now; it is the god of this world that does the veiling if there is any now. "If also our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in those that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving". That is an allusion to the veil in the previous chapter. God does not bring in any veil now; there is no barrier to keep a poor sinner at a distance. Man's heart is so self-sufficient that he will not turn to the Lord, but if he turns the veil is gone. There is not only the power of God, but the power of the god of this world and he brings in a veil now. He does his utmost to hide the gospel, to blind men's thoughts.

T The apostle speaks of it as our gospel.

CAC Paul had a sense of it all as being his own; that special ministry of glory was given to him. It is the gospel itself that is radiant. There is nothing like it anywhere. It is a radiant gospel; nothing else has such radiancy, such brightness, as the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ. The apostle was leading them on from the thought of new covenant blessing to the thought of new creation, and it is in leading on to this that he brings out "the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ". He is coming now to the truth of the Head, "Christ, who is the image of God". In this He is clearly the anti-type of Adam who was set up as the image of God. Here we come to the last Adam

and to the character of things that are to fill God's universe; everything that does not derive its character from Christ must go out. If a man is preaching the gospel and asks people if they have derived anything from Christ, the sinner would have to say, 'No'. Well, everything else must go. God has brought in something that will fill His universe with joy and gladness and glory; if people will not be filled with glory they must go out into darkness. Satan tells people they can do without the glory of Christ. It is most important that the radiant gospel should be preached; if you dwell on man's need it is not radiancy. The radiancy should be more pressed. God has provided such a wonderful Head for man, and if we know something of the blessedness of that Head we can finish with ourselves.

T But there is no start till the need is met.

CAC Yes, that is the first epistle, "Christ died for our sins ... was buried; and ... was raised". That is not the radiant side.

The thought behind all this is that of new creation, so we have Christ, the image of God, and "God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine"; this takes us back to Genesis 1. The brightness of new creation is the radiancy of the glory of the Christ. It is not the brightness that filled the old creation with light, the material sun, but it is the moral radiancy of the Christ; He is the Sun of new creation.

There is first the glory of the Lord as Mediator of the new covenant. It is the glory of the Lord that He can bring all that God is in grace to a poor sinner, and the grace is so immense that the Spirit and righteousness can be given. Nothing is asked for from us; the measure of that righteousness is Christ Himself, so that we have Christ instead of ourselves. That is the glory of the Lord. The glory of Christ is the thought of Headship. God has brought in One who is sufficient to fill the universe for His pleasure, so everything that has not come out of Christ must disappear. We are led up to new creation by seeing the radiancy of the Christ. He is the glory of God. Everything is filled out of Christ, and everything not derived from Him must disappear, must go out into darkness. Christ is the image of God; there is a perfect shining out of all that God is in this blessed anointed Man.

N Is it the same thought as in Colossians 1: "image of the invisible God"?

CAC Yes, everything is brought in in Colossians to enhance the greatness of the Head. We get a thought of it by contrast. Look at this world — everything came out of Adam, every mental and moral quality. Men boast of physical and mental powers, but everything came out of Adam and it is all corrupt; Adam had fallen before he became head of the race. Now as Adam was the source

of all in the old creation, so Christ in the same way is source of all in new creation; everything in God's world will flow out of Christ, just as everything in this world came out of Adam. It is wonderful that there will not be a single quality in new creation that did not come out of Christ, so that there will be an adequate setting forth of God in the moral universe.

E What is the moral universe?

CAC It is the setting forth of all that God is in the presence of all His intelligent creatures. Angels, principalities and authorities will learn in Christ and the church, and in all the blessed families that God will bring out of this ruined world, the blessedness and excellencies of God himself. It has often been said that the church is the lesson book of angels.

T Has not verse 6 a present application, the light has shone?

CAC It has shone forth in the ministry of the apostle, in Paul's gospel, "the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"; all the glory of God comes out there. It is not only the glory of a Man. "The radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ" is the glory of a Man who is the image of God, but in verse 6 we have what is greater, the glory of God in the face of a Man.

I have had the thought that the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ involves that He is the crown of all the ways of God. God's glory came out in His ways; you see it all through the Old Testament, and Christ is the crown of them all. Promise is the first element of all God's ways and Christ is the crown of that. The second element is sacrifice, and every sacrifice is headed up in Christ. The third element is resurrection and He is the crown of that. Then there is priesthood and rule; Christ is the crown of everything. The creature can only apprehend God's glory in His ways, and all God's ways reach their crown in Christ. He is the crown of them all, and the glory of God is in the Person of Christ. It is marvellous that this should be preached as glad tidings, that God should condescend to make His own glory good news to poor wretched man. The setting forth of God and of Christ will do men good; nothing else will. There were special dealings with Paul to make him a vessel of this good news. We could not learn it from any one but Paul. He had something that excelled all that the twelve apostles had; he called it, "my gospel".

T What a sense of mercy all this gives us!

CAC Yes, we might say that the thought of glory keeps one's heart up, and that the thought of mercy keeps one's head down.

N What follows is what God brings in on the vessel so that nothing may obstruct the light.

CAC Yes, "Death works in us". I remember a brother once saying to me that he believed the apostle could not preach save by divine power! He said, 'You and I can go out to a street corner and preach, and perhaps it is not in power, but there was such a discipline kept on Paul the vessel, that he could not go on except by divine power'. The Lord did not allow what was natural to come out in Paul, but kept His hand on him, so that all had to be in divine power with him. It meant very severe discipline that the power of God might come out. The apostle speaks here of the fruit of discipline, not only on his part, "bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus", but "always delivered unto death on account of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested".

T What is the dying of Jesus?

CAC It was always present to the heart of the apostle that Jesus had died here, so that he was never looking for anything but death in this world, not because of the wickedness and violence of man, but because Jesus had died.

This brings out his great affection for Jesus. It is the personal name, the dying of Jesus. Paul so loved the One that was before his heart that he carried about a sense of His dying, so that the life came out in Paul's body. The life of Jesus corresponds with the gospel of the glory. T. How wonderful that the life could come out in the body of a man!

CAC The apostles were set "for the last, as appointed to death": They had become as "the offscouring of the world" (1 Corinthians 4: 9, 13). I think this was so that a life of lowliness, meekness and gentleness might be manifested, the life of One led as a lamb to the slaughter.

T Was "life in you" the effect of death in the apostle?

CAC Is not that the secret of power? Death works in the servant so that life might work in those he serves. Paul's life was one of constant discipline, "always delivered unto death". His heart carried about the thought of the dying of Jesus. That was affection but then God delivers him to death; every day he had the constant sense that the next hour might be his last. Death was always brought in on him; on three voyages, the ships were wrecked; if he took a journey, he would perhaps fall among robbers. If he had lived at the present time we should have shaken our heads and thought there must be something wrong! There were perils of robbers, perils from the heathen, perils among false brethren. Five times he received forty stripes save one, thrice he was beaten; he was stoned; there was one form of death after another, and all that the life of Jesus might be manifested. Death must come in on what is

natural if what is spiritual is to be seen. Death always came in on Paul. Outwardly his was a life of discipline; he had a messenger of Satan to buffet him; he had that special affliction in his body.

S Is there any difference between body and mortal flesh? Is it to put it in a stronger light?

CAC Yes. Verse 10 is what Paul did, he bore about in the body the dying of Jesus. Then he was delivered to death; the divine intent was that the life of Jesus might come out even in mortal flesh. That is more wonderful than that it might come out in a glorified body. Everything is in view of resurrection, "Knowing that he who has raised the Lord Jesus shall raise us also with Jesus, and shall present us with you". Paul is not only bound up with the Lord Jesus, but with the saints — it is "with Jesus" and "with you".

N Paul has resurrection always in view; his trust was in God who raises the dead.

CAC All labour is to be undertaken in view of resurrection. "Abounding always in the work of the Lord" comes in at the end of the resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15.

2 CORINTHIANS 4 (SECOND READING)

2 Corinthians 4:7-18

CAC Our attention has been called to the wonderful character of God's ways with us at the present time. He has brought the light of the glory into the hearts of His saints; the treasure in earthen vessels is the gospel of the glory. We have got a ministry that subsists in glory; there was never anything like it; the glory of the Lord, and the glory of Christ, and the glory of God are brought out in it. Now in the portion before us we see the exercises that accompany the glory; we would not have one without the other. If we have glory we must have exercise and discipline.

N Is that because of what we are?

CAC The character of the vessel has always to be made apparent. We need to know that the vessel is an earthen one.

I like to put this chapter beside the burning bush in Exodus 3. It was only a bramble bush, but it was lighted up with the glory of God's presence; a bramble bush and an earthen vessel might go together! The bush burns with fire and is not consumed.

N Is that a figure of Israel?

CAC I think it is a figure of the fact that God would connect His glory with all the feebleness of man. He did it perfectly in incarnation; He did it in Israel; He did it in His people in the wilderness; glory was there and they were tested by fire, but not consumed. The earthen vessel is tested and manifested at every point, but not consumed.

Rem Moses spoke of the "good will of him that dwelt in the bush", Deuteronomy 33: 16.

CAC God is pleased to connect His glory with man, with an earthen vessel and a mortal body; we have new creation treasure in an old creation vessel.

Ques Is it the thought of a common vessel?

CAC I think it is the thought of weakness. We have to learn that in connection with such a treasure all the power must be of God.

Rem We may be able to give out a lot we have learnt from books, but it is a different thing to go through it.

CAC Just in proportion as the brightness of the treasure has been known people do go through it. God is faithful to put His saints through pressure and it is manifest that God is the source of power. When we are able to accomplish

something it may make us fancy ourselves! That is the very point where we get most humiliation. A man may think he can preach; that is the spot where he will get his bitterest humiliation. But the bush is not consumed; God lets the weakness and frailty of it appear; it is a bramble, and we find it is what we are; but God is there and He makes His power apparent after He has thoroughly convinced us of our weakness.

Fancy a man saying, "Every way afflicted"! If we are afflicted a little bit we think a lot of it, but Paul says, "every way afflicted"; that is the earthen vessel; then he says, "not straitened"; that is the power of God. Paul does not get narrowed up or thrown in on himself by his affliction; that is the power of God. When one is afflicted there is a great tendency to get thrown in on oneself, but the power of God comes in to prevent that. Here is a man afflicted and yet not straitened; he is thinking about the Lord's work and his heart wells forth thinking of this wonderful character of glory! Every one can see he is not narrowed up. Can anyone see us afflicted and yet not straitened? There is an expanse of glory and Paul has the liberty of glory; all affliction only helps to enlarge him.

The psalmist could say, "In pressure thou hast enlarged me". The natural effect of pressure is to narrow us up!

This is an exercise that God will insist on carrying us through.

Then he says, "Seeing no apparent issue, but our way not entirely shut up". What a trying thing we think it to see no way out, to have our way completely closed! How perplexing it is when we see no way through; we are fairly penned in, no way out, nothing but perplexity!

"Seeing no apparent issue".

N I thought that when we could not see our way through difficulties it showed we were not near the Lord, and that it was time to judge ourselves.

CAC The apostle was near the Lord, and he had the exercise. I think the point is that here is a man in full conscious possession of the treasure and these exercises come in to keep the vessel in place; he is not out of communion, but it is a necessary exercise to keep the vessel in place. When there is no way out of a difficulty, then God comes in just when you do not see your way out, and light is given for one step at a time. It is a great exercise and saints do not seem to know what God is doing with them; He is showing the character of the earthen vessel and setting aside all its power. "Persecuted" — the earthen vessel felt all that — "but not abandoned"; the Lord never forsook him. However great the difficulty the Lord was there.

Ques Is not the dying of Jesus putting to death?

CAC It is actually the working or process of death. We see in verse 10 what Paul did and in verse 11 what God did. "Delivered unto death" was God's way of discipline to make good what Paul had purposed in his heart. God holds us to our vows; that is the great comfort of making a vow.

B How did the apostle bear about the dying of Jesus practically?

CAC Is it not that the vessel may be a vessel and nothing else? The vessel with an active will would not be any good; it would not be a vessel properly. So far as Paul is concerned he is bearing about the dying of Jesus; that is the death blow to the will of the vessel. The dying of Jesus is that in which He sets forth before the whole universe the reality of His own word, "Not my will, but thine be done". The only One entitled to have a will is Jesus, and He gave it up. It was always absolutely perfect but He said, "Not my will, but thine be done", and He went into death. Paul carries about in a practical way the dying of Jesus so that there may be no movement of will in the vessel. If there is none, the body becomes the vessel in which there is full scope for the life of Jesus. The dying of Jesus is the extreme point of weakness. To bear about the dying of Jesus would be that the vessel is maintained in the sense of absolute weakness, so that nothing moves there but the power of God, and the power of God brings into evidence the life of Jesus. The life of Jesus perfectly corresponds with the glory. What Jesus was as a Man in this world is the perfect answer and correspondence to all the glory. There has been a perfect answer in a Man to it.

F The knowledge of being marked out for glory enabled Paul to venture on such a path of suffering.

CAC The light of glory had shone into the heart of the apostle and revolutionised it, and he became a vessel of treasure. It was the treasure that was the wonderful power in his soul. He had the treasure at the start; he saw the glory of the Lord, the glory of Christ and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; he got the threefold glory all at once. The Lord said, "I will shew to him how much he must suffer for my name", Acts 9: 16. He is taken up to be a suffering vessel of glory; there was a working of death all along his path and all power was of God; it is not of us.

N Would it help us if we started with the glory? We really shrink from the thought of suffering.

CAC Yes, the glory, the treasure, is first to enable us to bear the suffering.

B We do not get persecution now; easy times prevent our understanding these things.

CAC I think it is the way of God with every one of us that if we have a bit of the treasure we get the exercises that correspond with it. Death comes in on the vessel, and on our natural wills, and on sources of strength in us. We are all very small but principles are the same now as with the apostle. We are not burned at Smithfield, but saints are burned at their own firesides now! You can get a good deal of persecution in a small way. It is more difficult to be burned for forty years, a slow fire that, and it takes a good supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. J.B.S. used to say, 'It is easier to die a martyr than to live a confessor'. The spirit of faith comes into evidence: "Having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, I have believed, therefore have I spoken; we also believe, therefore also we speak". The spirit of faith comes in and lays hold of God's power, and there is practical deliverance from any natural resources in the vessel. Faith takes account of the power of God that can raise the dead, "He who has raised the Lord Jesus shall raise us also". When God's power works and His grace comes in there is nothing left for us to do but to give thanks; it is our happy occupation and that to the glory of God. It is wonderful to go through a pressure and difficulty so that there is a result. What Paul went through was for the good of the saints; his exercises had been endured for the good of others. As we were seeing lately, when people have discipline to go through they first think, 'What shall I get?' It is better to start at the other end and say, 'What will the saints get out of this?' Every exercise the saints go through is for the good of others.

M Then God gets something too.

CAC Yes, thanksgiving redounds to the glory of God, and thinking of that Paul says, "We faint not".

B It seems as if affliction would crush Paul.

CAC Yes, he was "cast down, but not destroyed". Satan was allowed to go to the limit. Paul was like a man whose enemy has cast him to the ground, and there was nothing left but to give him his death blow, but he was kept alive from day to day by the power of God. The outward man was consumed under this pressure, but the inward man was renewed day by day. All connected with the treasure is flourishing, and all connected with the vessel is in consumption!

N How Paul must have been filled with glory when he spoke of light affliction!

CAC Yes, he could not have said that unless he were conscious of the treasure. One covets to prove more of the power of God in sustaining us. God puts us through a variety of discipline, and we learn the weakness and the

earthiness of the vessel. It is a great thing if we can come out as vessels of divine power and glory so that there is nothing left but praise to God.

N What is the grace in verse 15; is it to the saints or to Paul?

CAC Grace abounded through the saints. Paul had a blessed sense of being bound up with the saints; he says that God "shall present us with you". All his suffering was for them with a view to grace abounding through them; it came out through the saints. The result is that thanksgiving abounds to the glory of God. That which is God's grace in people causes thanksgiving; God is glorified. God took us up that He might be glorified.

N Was this grace looked at as flowing from the saints to Paul?

CAC I think the exercise and discipline of the servant made the ministry effective towards others. The treasure is very wonderful, but then these exercises and suffering and discipline made the ministry effective towards others, and so they got the good of his ministry.

Rem F.E.R. used to say that grace was commensurate with glory.

CAC Grace abounds through the many so the apostle could see the fruit of his exercise and suffering in the blessing of the saints even in the present. All his suffering was having its answer in grace abounding in the saints.

M Paul was a living example, too, of what grace could do.

Rem Grace was abounding; you cannot limit it.

CAC And thanksgiving abounds to the glory of God. They are all praying and grace is given to him; saints get blessing and then they give thanks. They all share in the labour and all in the grace. Paul saw the travail of his soul in the saints.

2 CORINTHIANS 4 AND 5

2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21

CAC We have to learn the difference between the outward man and the inward man. We ought all to be exercised that we never get older than fifty; the Levite finished his service at fifty, and the Israelite at sixty. One would not like to become so feeble that one was not fit to be reckoned among the servants or warriors. It ought to be an exercise not to get so old as to be incapacitated. Paul felt the pressure of things in the outward man, but the inward was "renewed day by day". There is no age limit for priests; they never get old! There seems a special cheer in this being "renewed day by day"; it suggests a daily supply. It was actually the experience of the apostle, and therefore we might look that it might be ours.

Rem The inward man is in touch with God, and with unseen things.

CAC Then no kind of affliction ought to touch the inward man. I suppose Paul's afflictions here were those of a servant, not only a man.

Ques Is it like Colossians 1: 24, "I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for his body"?

CAC In our measure we ought to be on the same line, though we could not take the place of being servants like Paul. He speaks of filling up what was behind, as if Christ had left some of His sufferings to be continued in others. Paul took them up in a special way and continued them. Christ suffered for the church and Paul did, so it was Christ still suffering in the apostle for the church, and the result was a surpassing weight of glory. Paul was conscious of gain. I find in connection with suffering saints that there is a lack of that; there is perhaps more a sense of being helped through the trial. Paul had a real sense of gain: "our momentary and light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory". It was all bringing the vessel into suitability to the treasure, the glory; suffering kept the vessel in keeping with the glory.

Ques "But the Lord stood with me", 2 Timothy 4: 17. Was that for encouragement?

CAC Yes. Paul had spiritual manifestations of the Lord's presence at different times when he was severely tested. There were two at Jerusalem, and again at Rome; I think there were seven times in all, each at some crisis in his history.

Ques Does not Paul dwell on the fact that he had something to look at, a system of glory that he saw today, not only in the future?

CAC There is a whole system of things within the veil. Jesus has gone within; He is the Forerunner, and all this glory system is within; it is not outwardly manifested in any way. We read of being "strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory unto all endurance and longsuffering with joy", Colossians 1: 11. That is a wonderful thing. The epistle to the Hebrews was written to bring the Hebrew believers into the light of eternal things. They were apt to be taken up with religious things on earth, but it is an immense thing to get better acquainted with the whole system of things within the veil, for they are eternal things. Look at Hebrews 12, the things to which we are come. If one asks people, 'What have you come to?' some would say, 'I have come to Jesus'. That is very good; that is the centre of all, but there is a whole system of unseen things, Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, myriads of angels, the assembly of the firstborn, many wonderful things. We are called to labour in connection with that system of unseen things.

Paul says, "We faint not"; that is he goes on with his labours. We are not to be turned aside by politics and what is going on in the world. All that is transitory and it is all marked by lawlessness; the best things in man's world carry that stamp and it is all passing. Men that are labouring to put things into better shape in this world are like a great sculptor building a snowman: he would be wasting his time; he should work in marble.

Ques Might one connect the thought of unseen things with the house not made with hands?

CAC The treasure and all connected with it was eternal, but for the moment it was in an earthen vessel.

The earthen vessel and the "earthly tabernacle house" go together; the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" is what we shall be in the future, and then the treasure and the vessel will correspond.

Rem Looking at things not seen was the secret of Paul's labour in chapter 4, and of his confidence in chapter 5. The house here is different from the many mansions in John 14.

CAC This is our house, not the Father's house; we must go in there clothed. The best robe involves the glorified body; the completeness of it will be the glorified body. It is wonderful to think of being clothed with a body of glory; it is either that or being "found naked", a very solemn word brought in, "If indeed being also clothed we shall not be found naked".

Ques Is there a distinction between unclothed and naked?

CAC Yes. The unclothed state is the state of the departed spirits, not yet clothed, but "naked" means being found entirely unsuited to the presence of God, just as Adam felt himself to be when he said, "I feared,

because I am naked", Genesis 3: 10. That is, he found himself quite unsuitable; he had come under death. We must either be found naked eternally or be clothed upon with a glorified body, the same kind as is found in the Person of Christ on the very throne of God. It is the heavenly body here in contrast with the earthly; in 1 Corinthians 15 we have the resurrection side, but this is the heavenly side of the glorified body. "It is raised in incorruptibility" (1 Corinthians 15: 42) looks more at what comes up, but here it is what comes out of heaven; saints are going to be clothed with that bodily condition that is now already in heaven in the Person of Christ. There is only one glorified Man in heaven as far as I know.

There is disparity now between the treasure and the vessel — we all feel that constantly — but what is mortal will disappear; it will be "swallowed up by life". The apostle did not wish to be unclothed, but he was always confident, and ready to be absent from the body if it were so willed of God.

We cannot think of anything better than to be with the Lord; it is so wonderful to be with *Him*. Once or twice in one's life, one has realised what the presence of the Lord meant. He does visit His saints sometimes; He said He would, "I will come to you". We get a touch of it when He comes to His saints; no saint found in a company when the Lord came into the midst could ever forget it. That is the sort of thing that the departed saints enjoy; it is what we touch for a minute, perhaps two or three times in a long life! What a moment of rapture it is when a saint touches the blessedness of the Lord's presence with His own! The rapture of such a moment is always the portion of the departed. There are only eight words that describe the happiness of those who have departed. People talk sentimental rubbish about heaven, but the whole truth of the revelation of God as to departed saints is in eight words: "with me", "with the Lord", "with Christ" "rest". These eight words cover the blessedness of the departed; there is nothing else in Scripture. Who can tell how much is in them! The Lord said, "with me" to the thief, that is, with Jesus the Saviour. The thief went to be with the One who had saved him, who had brought all the grace and blessing of God to him. Think of being with Him! What rapture! The Lord is One who is supreme in power in the domain of death. He is Lord supreme; we do not need to fear death or anything. Christ is the blessed anointed One in whom everything is substantiated that God has purposed for us from eternity. Think of being with the One in whom all our blessing is

eternally secured! The departed are in the enjoyment of all they have known of Him in nearness to Him. Even that is not full fruition, we want clothing upon because we want to see Him. Every one of the departed saints is longing to see Him. We cannot see Him unless we are like Him — “we shall be like him”; the moment we see Him we shall be like Him, so that we shall never have the smallest sense of unsuitability. When we see His face His name will be written on our foreheads; that is the reflection of His likeness. What a supreme moment when the saints see Him with their eyes!

God had this wonderful thought that we should be conformed to the image of His Son; He has wrought us for it. We talk of God working in us, and He does that, but that is not the thought here; it is that He has wrought us. Every detail in the history of a saint has that in view, so the light affliction works for us. It seems to me like a lapidary working on a precious stone; he is grinding and polishing it and will in the end bring it out in all its glory.

The Spirit is the earnest of it all. The Spirit is really the glory brought into our hearts.

2 CORINTHIANS 5 (FIRST READING)

2 Corinthians 5:9-21

CAC It is striking the way these things are brought out, not in the way of teaching but shown as worked out in the experience of a man. These marvellous unseen things had a very practical effect on the man who was looking at them, so that, whether clothed upon or absent from the Lord, his exercise was to be agreeable to Him. It is a point of great importance that we should constantly seek to be agreeable to the Lord. The reason we do not make more spiritual progress is often a practical one. People think they will get on by coming to readings and listening to ministry, but a little practical adjustment of our ways so as to be agreeable to the Lord would help much towards spiritual progress.

Rem You would not have us stay away from meetings?

CAC No, but our home exercises should correspond with what we hear. A soul makes progress when there is some definite adjustment in view of being agreeable to the Lord.

Rem We have to mourn that we are not.

CAC Then we ought to alter our ways! If you feel you are not agreeable you alter your ways so that you may be. A saint cannot go on with a thing that he feels is not agreeable to the Lord. All will be manifested at the judgment-seat, but before that what a blessed thing it is to be agreeable to the Lord! Paul was conscious of being already manifested; the only effect on him of the thought of the judgment-seat was to make him persuade others; the thought made him concerned about others, not about himself. Everything that concerned himself was manifested to God, and he can say as well, "I hope also that we have been manifested in your consciences". There was perfect transparency Godward and manward. I think the saints could take account of him, that his motives as well as his actions were according to God and to Christ.

Ques Do you think the judgment-seat will bring out motives?

CAC In 1 Corinthians 4: 5 it is a question of motives, the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Lord will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and shall make manifest the counsels of hearts"; there it is what is hidden from man's eyes, but here it is the actual responsible history, what is done in the body.

Ques Is it since we were born, or since conversion?

CAC It is as long as you have had a body.

Rem Some have said, 'If all our sins are washed away, how can they come up before the judgment-seat?' That is quite true, but you would like to know all about it, would you not? The whole responsible history will be manifested — the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil. It is not to decide if one is saved, because when saints get there they will be in glorified bodies.

Ques Is it public, or between the Lord and the soul?

CAC I think it is a manifestation to individuals; I do not see what would be gained by making it public.

Rem There will be something found in every saint that God can mark with His approval.

CAC Yes, there will be a thought, if nothing else; there will be those "that thought upon his name", Malachi 3:16.

Ques What is meant by "the terror of the Lord" in this context?

CAC I should think that if Christ is on the judgment-seat it brings in that thought; it is very solemn.

Ques Does verse 10 apply to both saints and sinners?

CAC Yes, the "all" is universal, it takes in everyone.

I suppose the judgment-seat covers all, though at different times. I would include the great white throne in Revelation 20. If everything is to be scrutinised, how solemn it is! We can understand the apostle speaking of it as the "terror of the Lord"; it is not too strong a word.

Rem To bear that in mind would keep us from lightness and levity.

CAC It is a very solemn thing here; with many it will be found that they have done nothing but evil.

Ques Would that not be the unsaved?

CAC Yes, the judgment-seat here is a general thought.

Ques Do not the saints judge the world?

CAC That is not exactly sitting in judgment, but rather administering what is right. It is a solemn thing for saints to consider that everything is going to be scrutinised; it is a wholesome thought for us to consider what we are doing with our bodies all the time. If we are not exercised, we need to bear in mind that everything is coming out, and the Lord's estimate will be manifested plainly to us. Being zealous to be agreeable to the Lord is a question for the heart, but there is the other side for the conscience. We need both — every

solemn warning as well as encouragement. The thought of the judgment-seat would keep the conscience in exercise and would have a very preservative effect.

Ques Is this a judgment of works, not sins?

CAC Well, it is "those he has done, whether it be good or evil". It is not a question of sins being brought into judgment as sins; it is not the imputation of them, but it is a question of the Lord's estimate of everything in our lives.

Ques Where do you get the thought that verse 10 refers to sinners as well as saints?

CAC I get it from this, that we must all appear before the judgment-seat; it is a general principle. Will anyone escape being manifested? They will all be judged at different times, but all will be manifested; the estimate of Christ will be passed on every man. Everything will have to pass the standard of that Man. We know from other scriptures that the saints will pass the judgment-seat at the beginning of the millennium, and the wicked at the end, but everyone will be manifested there at some time or other.

Ques Is it not a different kind of judgment?

CAC I do not think there is an atom of difference in the estimation, whether it is of a saint or of a sinner. If a thing is wrong, it is wrong, and as bad in a saint as in a sinner; the estimate of the judgment of Christ will be passed on it.

Ques Is this the same as the Lord returning as in the parable of the talents?

CAC There it is the judgment of service; it is the responsibility of the servant to use the Master's goods; it is a question of how they are used and the service is judged. Here the judgment is general; it is on what is "done in the body". It all came out before in Paul. For a saint there can be no sense of condemnation because we are relieved of all that, but we are to be exercised in view of being manifested. The thought of the terror of the Lord moved Paul in his service. All this in the first and second epistles had a great bearing on those who had come in as false apostles, deceitful workers transformed as ministers of righteousness. They were not converted men, but found prominence in the christian circle as teachers and preachers, and they undermined the work of the apostle. This all had a bearing towards them.

Ques Will our works affect our position?

CAC Not in heaven, but the place we have in the kingdom; one is over ten cities and another over five, and so on. We are in the Father's house as sons,

and there is no difference in glorified bodies. The saints are in them before they come before the judgment-seat; they are all like the Lord Himself.

Rem The love of Christ is the motive of service, "The love of the Christ constrains us".

CAC It is very important for us to arrive at this judgment: "having judged this: that one died for all, then all have died". This is what Paul had come to in his own judgment; it is not simply a fact of truth. Shall we get any of the good of what follows until we arrive at the same judgment?

Ques Is the "all" the same as in verse 10?

CAC Yes; the all is contrasted with "they who live", they are a limited class. It is a solemn thought that all are dead; that is the judgment you come to as being in the embrace of the love of Christ: "one died for all, then all have died".

Ques Is not verse 13 very important? To God Paul was beside himself, but he was sober for their sake.

CAC We can let ourselves go unrestrainedly Godward. If we think of God's love, and His purpose in Christ, and all the blessed things He has prepared and freely given, we can let ourselves go and there is no need for restraint; but, when it is a question of the saints, we have to consider what we say or do. Godward there is nothing but pure joy, you are not detained or hindered by any thought of yourself; but if you think of others you have to be sober.

Ques Would you say it was more than once?

CAC Paul tells it as if it were a thing he knew about, not at any particular time, but rather habitually. If beside himself to God, he would be sober towards men.

Ques Does "sober" give the thought of being temperate and controlled?

CAC You would consider what is good for others; you do not go in for rhapsody, but consider what will be good for your brethren. The apostle took a sober account of the need of the Corinthians; he does not let himself go in his epistles; he held himself in check soberly. He had a good deal in his mind that he could not bring out because they were not fit for it.

Rem The expression, "the love of Christ", only occurs three times in the New Testament — here, in Romans 8: 35 and in Ephesians 3: 19.

CAC It is the love of the Man. What are the three aspects of it?

Rem In Romans 8 it is the love of the Priest, in Ephesians it is the love of the Head, and here it is connected with the Lord.

CAC There is something peculiarly touching about the love of Christ, that blessed anointed Man; we have His love as Priest and as Head, as you say. Could we speak of it here as connected with the consecration offering? He has gone into death to secure a consecrated company. The triumph of His love is that He secures a company absolutely devoted to Himself, and that is for the pleasure of God in reconciliation. That love embraces the soul; it is the love of Christ that holds us. "Constrain" is the same word as in Luke 22: 63, where they "held"

Jesus. It means that we are in the embrace of the love of Christ and held by it, and in this way we live, quickened by the voice and love of Christ. Every one according to flesh becomes of small account in the light of that, and in this way we can arrive at the truth of what follows.

Ques What would you say as to not knowing Christ after the flesh?

CAC He has died; there is no Christ after the flesh now; He is the risen, ascended, glorified One. If we are in Christ we are in the risen One and therefore in new creation, an entirely new beginning. This is the estimate of things that the soul who is in the embrace of the love of Christ comes to; we anticipate the glorified state. Old things are not yet actually passed away; we are in the same bodies and the system of the world goes on as it did but, in the mind and consciousness and judgment of the one who is in the embrace of the love of Christ, all these things are gone. Men after the flesh are gone, new things have come in and we can live in the blessedness of new creation, anticipating in spirit the glorified state. This delivers the soul from the whole system of present things; if we do not know any man after the flesh we are pretty much out of the world. We do not take account of a man except as one for whom Christ died: the mightiest monarch on earth is only a poor sinner for whom Christ died for the end of all his importance and glory has come in the death of Christ. That is the inward consciousness of the soul. Outwardly we give him respect, but inwardly all after the flesh has gone in the death of Christ. All the great activities of men, great generals and admirals, are nothing in the saint's inner consciousness and judgment. It is not that he does not recognise them and give them the honour due to them, but in his own spirit and mind they are only poor sinners for whom Christ died. We belong to a system where all is of God.

2 CORINTHIANS 5 (SECOND READING)

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

CAC This part of the chapter is deserving of attentive consideration; it is the crown of the apostle's ministry in this epistle. The love of Christ is the spring of everything that is for the pleasure of God; the love of Christ in which He went into death will be the underlying cause of God's pleasure throughout the universe. We do not arrive at a divine thought save as we are held by the love of Christ. In the consecration of the priests, the blood of the ram of consecration was put on their right ear, right thumb, and right toe; that is, the whole man had to come under the devoted love of Christ told out in death. What we have here in verse 14 answers very much to that. If God is to have His place there must be a priestly state. The trouble at Corinth was that whilst the tabernacle of testimony was there priestly condition as lacking so everything had got out of order. The apostle is working to bring about priestly state so that the tabernacle may be in order. If we are held by the love of Christ we come to this divine judgment. It is very important that this truth is put before us as the judgment of a man held by the love of Christ, and if this is so the blood will be on his ear. We have not sound judgments because our ear is open to all kinds of judgments of men. The ear is the avenue to all that is within so, if the ear is not kept, consecration will not be effected. We should judge everything from the standpoint of the love of Christ that went into death; everything inconsistent with that is not worth anything to us. People read all kinds of books and absorb all kinds of thoughts, and that is the reason why priestly service is so deficient. If the ear is not kept the hand and foot will not be, so the service and walk will be more or less on worldly principles and will not be according to the holy grace and dignity of priesthood.

There was only one way in which the love of Christ could touch men and that way was by dying for them; no other way could have helped man. He said, as it were, 'Nothing will do but that I must die for them'; that was His estimate of the condition in which men were, so One died for all. It shows the state in which men were; there was no hope at all of God having any pleasure in man after the flesh. It shows the entire setting aside of man in the flesh; all were dead, so there was no use considering man any longer from the point of view of God's pleasure, but man's worthlessness had been demonstrated in the way of love. It is not that God came in with a smashing blow, but Christ came in in love and went into death. If we are held by the love of Christ we drop man after the flesh altogether as dead and done with, because nothing whatever springs out of man in the flesh for God's pleasure. We learn that lesson first. Everything for God's pleasure flows from the love of Christ. It is wonderful to

think that what God had in mind was good pleasure in men. Some have been celebrating today God's good pleasure in men; that is the thought of reconciliation, but it did not come to pass by Christ coming into the world. The heavenly hosts celebrated it then, but His death was necessary before it could come in; it was only by death that God's pleasure could be brought about. Think of God looking to find His pleasure in us! It was His eternal purpose but it was brought about through Christ.

Ques Is it the object of Paul's ministry to make this known to us?

CAC Yes, to bring us all into the circle of divine pleasure. No ministry is more needed than the ministry of reconciliation; it brings the soul consciously into the circle of divine pleasure.

Ques Do we see it in type in Luke 15?

CAC Yes; there it was a scene of pleasure for the Father; His heart sounded the key-note of divine merriment. The point of the love of Christ here is the devoted love of a blessed Man who went into death to establish the delight of God in man. He came forth to be the true ram of consecration, so that there might be a consecrated company set in the presence of God, not only for their happiness but to minister to the pleasure of God.

Ques Have we been thinking too much of our own side?

CAC Yes. It is so important that we should be held by the love of Christ, because then we should look at things as the love of Christ regards them. The first thought of His heart was not to meet the need of man, but to fill up the pleasure of God in man. "Glory to God in the highest", "On earth peace", "Good pleasure in men", these were the things in the heart of Christ when He went into death, and if the love of Christ holds us these are the things we shall be thinking about.

Rem The love of Christ takes in divine counsel.

CAC Christ appears in the universe in manhood in a power of love that can give effect to all the delights of God. He is the source and object of every movement of life; there is not a movement in my soul that He is not the source of, and not only that, but He is the object before my heart. He has come and gone into death, and He is the living spring of life, 'Life-giving Head Thou art'. Being the source of life, He becomes the object also of those who live; they live to Him.

Ques Is it the same as in Romans 14: 8, living or dying to the Lord?

CAC There it is considering the claims of the Lord,

for He has rights and claims, but here it is the attraction of love that if He died for all, then those who live are under the necessity of love to live to Him. When the Lord rose from the dead He took the place of Head in resurrection, and on the first day of the week He became the source of life. There were Mary, Peter, the two going to Emmaus — how the Lord touched each of them! His life-giving touch was on every heart and the result was they lived to Him; only one Person was to be thought of.

Scribes and rulers and the potentates in Jerusalem, with all the paraphernalia of the religious world, were nothing to them! There was only one Person out of death; He had touched their spirits and had become a life-giving Head to them and they lived to Him. We can understand that they had no thought but for Him. The Lord's supper ought to be to us what the Lord's actual presence was then. It is that which brings Him to mind in His absence and should be a life-giving touch to our spirits; it should make us feel that we have only one Person to think of and to live to.

Rem The two on the way to Emmaus and immediately returned to the company.

CAC Yes, they were held by the love of Christ so had a correct judgment; they wanted to be in the place where the Lord's interests were. It is from the standpoint of the pleasure of God that we know no one according to flesh. It is very wonderful because, "if even we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer". He has died and now He is risen and glorified: if we are in Christ, we are in a risen and glorified One.

Rem Christ according to flesh is received by everyone, but the only way we can know Him is in glory.

CAC The moment we touch that side, man feels that he is out of his depth; it is new creation ground. Those who have been touched by the love of Christ and live to Him are in Christ, but it is in Christ as the risen One. The starting-point of new creation is resurrection, it is outside the natural sphere. It is a new spiritual order and old things have passed away. Old things would be connected with man after the flesh, law, ceremonies, things men could touch and handle; all these have gone in the death of Christ. New creation gives the idea of an altogether new sphere, a new region.

Ques What was it to know Him after the flesh?

CAC The disciples had known Him as a Man walking about in this world; then they lost Him, He had gone in death, but on the resurrection day they found Him in a new condition as risen from the dead. It is not that we forget what He was morally, for He "is the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to

come" (Hebrews 13: 8), but He is, as to condition, no longer after the flesh; He is risen and glorified.

Rem It is not only resurrection, but ascension. We could only know Him in glory.

CAC Yes. Paul's first introduction to Him was in glory, and Paul is the pattern man in christianity. There is a great talk in the religious world about the historical Christ. It is not that we forget what He was on earth, because everything that came out in Him abides. Whatever was true morally of Him when here is true today, but there is a complete change in the condition of His manhood; it is a resurrection and heavenly order and we come into that order spiritually. "The old things have passed away; behold all things have become new: and all things are of the God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ".

Reconciliation is the full light of Paul's gospel as presented in this epistle. God is known in reconciliation; He has come out in Christ to place things before Himself according to His pleasure. Flesh has no room; every man is out of court, and only Christ remains. It is in Christ and by Christ that God reconciles. God brings about a state according to His pleasure; He establishes His pleasure and beseeches men to come into it. When God comes out in Christ it is not to talk to men about their offences; He says, as it were, 'I leave all that. Come into the circle of My pleasure'. God is saying to every sinner under heaven, 'I am not taking account of your sins now; I have Christ before Me, the object of My pleasure, and I invite you to come into that circle'. Four of the most amazing words in Scripture are, "Be reconciled to God". One line of Paul's gospel is summed up in them; the other line is sonship. Now it is a question of ministry. Paul says, "God ... has ... given to us the ministry of that reconciliation"; that is, it is brought to men by a man, Paul, so it is a human voice that speaks. It is grace that takes up a man, the chief of sinners, and God says, 'I will make that man My mouthpiece through whom I will speak to men in grace, and I will beseech them through the voice of that man'.

There are two things: God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation, and God has put in us the word of that reconciliation. Besides giving Paul the ministry God put the testimony of what was in His heart into Paul. This is like Galatians 1: 16, where Paul says, "God ... was pleased to reveal his Son in me". God revealed His Son in the heart of a man, so that that man might go to the nations and preach His Son as glad tidings. Paul could say to the nations, 'You can come into blessed relationship with God as sons'. The two lines of Paul's ministry are sonship and reconciliation. God put the word of reconciliation into Paul; he says, 'You can come where there is not a spot or

shadow of distance', "Be reconciled to God". The way it is put is so wonderful. Then Paul is ambassador for Christ, so Christ is entreating through His ambassadors, and God is, as it were, beseeching. Paul does not quite say that God is beseeching but he puts it as near to that as possible.

Verse 21 is the ground of it all. He was made sin for us, and the answer to the atoning work of One who knew not sin was that we might become God's righteousness in Him. We have sometimes heard that Christ in glory is the answer to the atoning work, but that is the answer to the Person. God's answer to the Person was by putting Him in glory; His answer to His atoning work was by putting the saints in glory; nothing but that could be the answer to His work. Christ was so infinitely delightful to God that He puts Him in glory. No work was needed to put Christ in heaven, He could have gone there at any time; but the answer to His work is that saints become God's righteousness in Him. We cannot understand what it was for Him to be made sin; "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us" is one of the most solemn statements of Scripture. I suppose the myriads of redeemed who have become the righteousness of God in Him, for ever glorified in Him, will be the setting forth to the universe of the value of His being made sin. The saints' becoming the righteousness of God is so absolutely of God. It is not like Romans 3, the righteousness of God upon all who believe, but they are become the righteousness of God in Him just as He was made sin. There is not an atom of flesh there, but all is of God and so eternally for the pleasure of God. It is not here the Father and His children, but God and man, not a family thought, not sonship, but God and man. Men have become a positive delight to God; they are His righteousness in Christ.

Saints are privileged to come in spirit into all this now.

Reconciliation in its full results is future, because it involves having a glorified body. The "best robe" is that nothing comes under God's eye but Christ; spiritually we can touch that order of things even now. It is Paul's gospel but saints need it. It is a splendid gospel for sinners; it is like the four rivers of Eden in Genesis. Eden means pleasure, and four rivers flow out of it. The gospel is a universal testimony that God's pleasure is established in Christ. Paul's gospel goes out, north, south, east and west like the rivers, and that was universality. God is inviting all men to come into His pleasure in Christ. There is nothing saints need more than to be evangelised! How feeble we are in the gospel! A brother once said to another, 'You have never known what it is to be an object of delight to the heart of God'. That might be said of many of us; if we do not know that, we have not received Paul's gospel. That is reconciliation, we are objects of delight to the heart of God.

The prodigal is brought into the circle of divine pleasure; he lived in the consciousness of the father's delight in him. If you had said to him, 'What kind of terms is your father on with you?' he would have said, 'The best of terms'. If you had said, 'What kind of terms are you on with your father?' he would have said, 'I am an object of delight to him'. How few christians have entered into this! The Corinthians did not, as they were not in a priestly state. The priests were washed, brought under the value of the blood, and clothed; that is, in figure, made delightful to God so that they could come near to Him, be consciously pleasurable to Him. What a spring for service to God if we are consciously in that, knowing that our very presence is a delight to God. The priests sent up the sweet savour of the different offerings which brought the perfections of Christ to God. The offerer brings Christ for acceptance, and the priest ministers for God's delight.

Rem Were all the offerings offered on the burnt offering?

CAC The burnt-offering was always the measure of God's thought for His people, so the morning and evening lamb were a perpetual sweet savour of Christ; it was official, it was how God viewed His people. When we bring our offerings we are consciously identified with the delight of God in Christ. Such a person is in reconciliation, he can come to God with no thought of himself. He is only thinking of Christ and he is a positive delight to God, a contribution to His praise.

2 CORINTHIANS 6 (FIRST READING)

2 Corinthians 6:1-18

CAC There are two beseechings in chapters 5 and 6, and they really go together. The first beseeching is, "Be reconciled to God", and the second is, "We also beseech that ye receive not the grace of God in vain". The first gives the immensity of grace, "Be reconciled to God", and the second is that grace should have its right effect on us. The two sides go together; there is blessed ministry and then, if people profess to receive it, there is the question as to what kind of effect it has had upon them. The ministry is seen in chapter 5 and the practical effect of it in chapter 6. We were saying that the ministry of reconciliation was like the prodigal putting on the best robe; if we have it on inside, shall we go about in rags outside? If you have the best robe on in God's sight, that is, have come into the complacency of God where Christ is all, what kind of man are you going to be outside? If you have the best robe on inside and your old rags outside, then you have received the grace of God in vain. J.N.D. used to say, 'If you are in Christ, then Christ is in you; now take care that nothing but Christ comes out of you'. That is like this chapter, which shows Christ coming out in the apostle. It is the working out of the ministry of reconciliation: if we are brought into the favour of God, into the circle of His pleasure where Christ is everything, this must have a practical effect. People may say, 'We are such poor weak creatures, we are of no account to God; He will not answer our prayers'.

Ques Is it not a good thing to think ourselves of no account?

CAC It is better still to take the place with God that His grace has given us. The marvellous thing is that the apostle here puts the saints in the place of Christ, so that they can get their prayers heard and answered just as Christ did. That is verse 2, "I have listened to thee in an accepted time, and I have helped thee in a day of salvation". We often take that verse as if it were addressed to sinners, but it is addressed to Christ. If you look at it in Isaiah 49 you can see that verse 6 is addressed to Christ, and then verse 8: "In a time of acceptance have I answered thee, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people".

Ques Why was this quoted to these saints?

CAC That is just the beauty of it; Paul puts them in the place of Christ! The ministry of reconciliation puts us in the presence of God in all the acceptance of Christ; He calls us into a circle where there is nothing but Christ and gives us His place. Then turn to the other side and see that you are put into Christ's

place down here; the accepted time is the time of reconciliation. So now, just as God listened to Christ and answered Him, preserved Him, strengthened Him, so He will listen to you, preserve you, strengthen you, and give you to know the power of His salvation. We are in the acceptance of Christ with God, and God is just as favourable to us as He was to Christ, and He will hear our prayers just as He heard Christ's — it is most encouraging. A saint may say, 'How can I come out like Christ down here?' You have to learn that it is a day of salvation. God has accepted us in the same acceptance as Christ, and it is His pleasure to listen to our prayers just as He listened to Christ because we are in the place of Christ down here. This is the gospel for saints; it is wonderful to be heard and answered just as Christ was. It reminds me of John 15: 7, 8: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall come to pass to you. In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, and ye shall become disciples of mine". Then in verse 16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have set you that ye should go and that ye should bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide, that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he may give you". We are put in the place that Christ was in, and this corresponds with what we are reading, where we get much fruit. It is conditional on praying; it all comes out in a man who prays; God listens to him and he gets God's help. Then all the fruit comes out, all that marks the life and service of Paul; it comes out as the result of prayer. Verse 12 shows the root from whence it comes; it is all in reference to prayer. Suppose there is a working of flesh in my heart; if I have received the ministry of reconciliation I judge it, because if it is not Christ it must be set aside; it is a bit of the old rags that will not do. I remember it is a day of salvation, I turn to God and He helps and preserves me and that bit of flesh is set aside. What a wonderful thing it is that we should get help so as to come out like Christ!

There is a difference between the exercises of the apostle in chapter 4 and those in chapter 6. In chapter 4 his exercises are in connection with the new covenant, but in chapter 6 they are in keeping with the ministry of reconciliation. In chapter 4 it is the discipline of God that comes upon him: "Every way afflicted, but not straitened; seeing no apparent issue, but our way not entirely shut up; persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed". The outward man was consumed. It is the discipline of God with the vessel so that nothing may obscure the shining out of the treasure, so that the light may shine out in the excellency of God's power. In chapter 6 it is more the personal character of the servant that comes out; it is more what corresponds with the ministry of reconciliation, Christ everything. The servant is exercised and prays that his life and service may be in keeping with the

ministry. In chapter 4 God exercises the servant, and in chapter 6 the servant exercises himself. Paul was a sample of a man who did not receive the grace of God in vain; he let it work out in him. In every saint you would find something of Christ, but it may be very small. Paul was an all-round man; he touches on everything in this chapter, and it is Christ at every point. There is every kind of circumstance — “In much endurance, in afflictions, in necessities, in straits, in stripes, in prisons, in riots”. In every kind of difficult circumstance Paul knows it is an acceptable time; he is praying and God is helping him and preserving him, so that nothing but Christ comes out in every circumstance. We think sometimes that if our circumstances were more favourable we should do better, but when that thought comes into our minds we had better look at verses 4 and 5. One could hardly imagine more difficult circumstances.

Rem We get fresh grace for every trial.

CAC Yes. The tree of life bears fruit every month; in all the difficult seasons some kind of fruit comes out. It is the Father’s pleasure and glory that we should bring forth fruit. Fruit is the reproduction of Christ, that which was true in Him coming out in the saints; nothing else is fruit. In verses 4 and 5 we get the circumstances first: seven things are mentioned, “In much endurance, in afflictions, in necessities, in straits, in stripes, in prisons, in riots”. Then the character of the service comes out, “In labours, in watchings, in fastings, in pureness, in knowledge, in longsuffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in love unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God ...”. All this shows the character of his service; he spread it all out in detail. It reminds one of the cutting up of the burnt-offering “into its pieces”. We can look at every separate thing and see something of the perfection of Christ in all. Paul was always labouring, then “watchings”; a most watchful man he was; all his epistles show how he watched the saints and wrote to them just what was needed. Then “fastings”; he was not ministering at all to himself. It was manifested to the saints and he commended himself in all that came out in his service, pureness, knowledge, longsuffering, the Holy Spirit. Every part of his service shows that the Holy Spirit was dwelling in him, leading him, energising him. It is wonderful to think of it all coming out in a man of like passions to ourselves; it can come out in us the same way that it came out in Paul. It is marvellous! God is just as pleased to hear our prayers and answer them as He was to hear and answer the prayers of the apostle. The measure of God’s delight in hearing us is His delight in hearing Christ. We say, ‘I am such a poor thing. I do not deserve anything!’ Then you do not get anything — “According to your faith, be it unto you”, Matthew 9: 29. We get what we expect; that is why so much prayer gets no answer. Have you received the ministry of reconciliation?

If you have, draw near to God in the good of it, in the blessed sense that you are accepted in all the perfection of Christ. Is it true? Of course it is! Those are the terms I am on with God; I am accepted in all the perfection and good pleasure that God has in Christ. God says, 'Come into the circle of My pleasure'.

Rem We do not know what to pray for as we ought.

CAC Do you not think that refers to circumstances? "We do not know what we should pray for as is fitting" (Romans 8: 26), because we do not know what is good for us. Suppose a delicate child falls ill and the parent does not know what to pray for. He can kneel down and present himself before God in exercise, bring it all before God, and "the Spirit itself makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered". The Holy Spirit knows what is good for the child; it may be to go to be with Christ, but the parent does not know. "He who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for saints according to God". But, in the sense we are speaking of here we know what to pray for; there is no doubt as to whether Christ should come out in me. It is a question here of Christ coming out and of fruit-bearing, and you could not say, 'I do not know if I ought to pray that Christ may come out'. You go to God and pray on that line and He is as pleased to hear you as He was to hear Christ, and He will answer you as He answered Christ. No doubt Paul went on those lines and that is why he came out as a true servant of God and an overcomer. I do not see why we should not be exercised to come out in the same way. If I have received the ministry of reconciliation and have on the best robe, if I am in a place where there is not a stain, in all the acceptability of Christ, then I want to bring Christ out in a practical way and to bear fruit. God says, 'It is an acceptable time; pray to Me, and I will preserve you and answer you'.

In the end of verse 7 we find the kind of weapons that Paul used in service, "the arms of righteousness on the right hand and left", no carnal weapons, no trying to please men, but always doing what is right before men. Saints who observed Paul could not help knowing that he was serving in the power of the Holy Spirit. You could take Paul's life to pieces, just as the offerer cut up the sacrifice; you could look at this piece and that piece, look all round and you would see Christ on every piece. Paul was tested by many changes and contrasts in the way people treated him; "through glory and dishonour, through evil report and good report: as deceivers, and true; as unknown, and well known". He is referring to the way the saints treated him.

Rem One would hardly think Paul could meet with this.

CAC It seems he did. The apostle had to go through all these contrasts. Nothing tries us like people changing in their manners, smiles one day, that is glory, and scowls the next day, that is dishonour. Paul was one day thought well of; another day all in Asia turned away from him. I shall never forget an old brother coming to Bradford and speaking on this scripture; there was friction in the meeting but he knew nothing about it. He pressed over and over that we should go on, it may be dishonour, people may change, but go on; it is an opportunity for Christ to come out. If people are nice, I have to see that I am not lifted up; if they are nasty, I have to see that Christ comes out.

Rem It all leads up to Paul being able to say, "I have finished my course".

CAC Yes, one step dishonour, the next glory. Then "unknown", that is worst of all. No one takes account of him at all; that is worse than anything. For no one to take any notice of me is very testing.

Rem In the day of glory they would have plucked out their eyes to give to Paul.

CAC Yes, and directly he went away they turned from him. What a test these changes are! We can read all this in a quarter of a minute, but what does it mean to go through it! Fancy people thinking Paul a deceiver and he had to go on with them; he was a true man, the most blessed servant of the Lord that ever trod this earth, and yet there were wretched believers who thought him a deceiver! It only brought Christ out in him; he felt it all, but he went on. All this changing cast him on God and he had to pray. Then he was thrown into prison and he says to the Philippians, 'It is all right, it will turn to my salvation'. It was not only prison, but people preaching Christ of envy, but Paul says, "This shall turn out for me to salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus", Philippians 1: 19. Prayer goes up, supply comes down, and Christ comes out in the servant; that is the day of salvation. If we give way to sinners, we shall go about in rags!

Rem We must not expect to be understood. Scripture says that the world knoweth us not.

CAC That is the world, but if people are carnal they think as the world does. If we are misconstrued we must go on; it is an exercise to cast us on God in prayer. It is a fixed principle that no exercise does us any harm if it casts us on God in prayer; if it does not, it may bring out a lot of horrid flesh; but if it casts us on God Christ comes out.

"If even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved", 2 Corinthians 12: 15. Paul says, 'I shall most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your souls and it will be on this condition, I will be very glad to go on'. That is overcoming evil

with good. The more difficulties, the more opposition and enmity Paul had to meet, the more grace came out in him. It is very wonderful. "As dying, and behold we live; as disciplined, and not put to death;

as grieved, but always rejoicing; as poor, but enriching many; as having nothing, and possessing all things": what amazing contrasts! If you put together all these things in this chapter, you will have a very good idea of "the day of salvation". God comes in and says, 'I will save you from everything, from vanity when people speak well of you, and from mortification when people speak evil of you; it is the day of salvation'. We do not expect anything from the world, but evil-speaking is harder to bear from the saints; yet it is an opportunity for grace of Christ to come out.

Endurance, or patience, is the leading quality of the servant and the only moral quality of the apostle mentioned here: "The signs indeed of the apostle were wrought among you in all endurance", 2 Corinthians 12: 12. He does not say 'power', as we should have done.

Paul wanted to get them enlarged; he brings all these things out and then says, 'I am telling you all this to get you enlarged'. If we meditated on this chapter and saw the grace of it we should be enlarged, and we should see what a day of salvation is, a time when we can get our prayers answered, when God will save us and preserve us and bring Christ out in us. It is most encouraging.

2 CORINTHIANS 6 (SECOND READING)

2 Corinthians 6:11-18

CAC I suppose that a man in the good of the first ten verses of this chapter is entitled to have his mouth opened and his heart enlarged. I have thought it is a little like Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2: "My heart exulteth in Jehovah, my horn is lifted up in Jehovah; my mouth is opened wide over mine enemies; for I rejoice in thy salvation". That is how she begins, and she finishes by saying, "He will give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed". We were seeing how the saints are put in the place of Christ; they are set before God in all the acceptance of Christ, so that they get all their prayers answered as Christ did; they are put in the place of God's Anointed in this world. Isaiah 49: 8, which speaks of Christ, is applied to the saints here in verse 2; the saints are as well-accepted as He was.

Ques Is it not a question of righteousness here that we are to be separate?

CAC Righteousness and salvation go together; we find that in the Old Testament. We shall only walk in paths of righteousness as we are walking in the day of salvation. The day of salvation here refers to saints, not to sinners.

Rem Thousands have been converted through this verse.

CAC Yes, that is so. You can drive a screw with a chisel, but it does not follow it is the right tool to use! It was a well-accepted time because there was a Person in this world praying who was perfectly delightful to God; it filled God's heart with joy to hear and answer Him. Now the saints are in the perfect acceptance of Christ; they are a new creation and are set in reconciliation. God hears and answers their prayers; He delights to fill up their whole life here with His salvation. If we want an enlarged heart and an open mouth we must be on that line. What characterises the day of salvation is God helping a blessed Man in his pathway here (notice J.N.D.'s translation of Isaiah 49: 8). We are put in the same place so that we may pray and be answered; it is a day of salvation all along the line. It shows how completely the saints are identified with Christ. How important it is not to have too low thoughts of ourselves! If we think too highly of ourselves it is because we have too low thoughts. If God has made you a prince, do not pretend to be a beggar! People say, 'God could not hear my unworthy prayer'. So they get nothing; we get what we expect. God has given us the place of Christ and if we do not take that place with God we are not receiving His grace properly. Suppose when the prodigal got into the house that he said, 'I will not wear the best robe, I am all in rags, I cannot put it on, and I cannot have any of the fatted

calf'. A great deal of what passes for humility is wretched pride; it was pride that made the prodigal want to say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants".

No one had such a deep sense of what he was, the chief of sinners, as Paul had, and no one had such a blessed sense of acceptance in Christ. Grace makes you realise where you were, a beggar on the dunghill. Then, knowing our acceptance in Christ we have confidence in God that He will hear and give every help needed. Therefore our heart rejoices and is enlarged; that is what we find here as Paul expands in all the greatness of grace.

Rem There is always this confidence.

CAC Yes, and confidence that what comes out shall be Christ. It is not that we pray to get our circumstances changed but, as Paul said, that Christ should be magnified. He could say, 'You are praying, and Jesus Christ is sending me down supplies of the Spirit and I want Him to be magnified; it is the only thing that matters, it is no matter if I get out of prison or not'.

Ques Why does the apostle quote from Old Testament scriptures? The Corinthians were gentiles.

CAC Every principle can be established from the Old Testament. How often in Romans Paul quotes from it! sixteen times he says, "It is written". It was so important that the gentiles should be acquainted with God's former ways; He had been telling out His mind and His ways in His word for four thousand years, and it was important that they should see it.

How anxious Paul was that they should be enlarged! He was enlarged himself and he wanted them to be also. He says that his heart was expanded; that is a good word for saints, it is the heart. They were straitened in their affections, not in Paul; he had given them the full gospel and they had seen the proper effect of it in him. I do not suppose any of us has ever seen a proper christian. Look at Paul here; he was a proper christian from the outset; he had the Son revealed in him and the word of reconciliation put in him. His life corresponded with what was within, so that people could not say, 'Paul says one thing but he is quite different himself'. The truth was made good in the affections of a man. We have never seen Paul except as presented in Scripture but the Corinthians saw him come in and go out among them, and he says that they did not get a limited idea of christianity. He could say, 'You are not straitened in me'. Christianity has been set before us in Paul; he says, 'Now widen out!' We ought to be exercised to be expanded. The divine intent was that Paul should be the model christian; we cannot read the epistles without seeing he was the pattern man. He says, 'The best thing I could wish for you is to be like me!' Then he exhorts Timothy to be a model of the believers. Paul never exhorted

others to be what he was not himself; he was a model. He had a wonderful sense of grace; he was in the good of the ministry of the new covenant and the ministry of reconciliation, so he was expanded; there was nothing narrow about him. We want expanded hearts. 'Yet oft we credit not, He freely gives as God'; a straitened heart does not credit God with giving; we have such poor little shrivelled hearts! The Lord said, "If thou knewest ... thou wouldest have asked ... and he would have given", John 4: 10. We want our hearts expanded to know how freely God gives; we honour Him by confidence in Him.

Rem Paul said, "That in me, the first, Jesus Christ might display the whole long-suffering, for a delineation of those about to believe on him to life eternal", 1 Timothy 1: 16.

CAC Yes, he is a pattern as a sinner, as a saint and as a servant. Then in connection with enlargement the truth of separation comes in. We want enlarging in the sense of grace, and if we are not separate we receive the grace of God in vain.

Rem There are great contrasts here, righteousness and lawlessness, light and darkness.

CAC Yes, and in Proverbs wisdom and folly are contrasted; it is a most important book to study. You could not fancy wisdom and folly yoked together! If saints do not separate from the unconverted the result is disastrous.

Rem Nothing is more powerful in testimony than separation.

CAC Yes, separation is the witness of the power of God. If Christians only remembered what persons they are, not what they ought to be, they could not associate and be yoked with an unbeliever. We ought to remember we are believers and carry about the sense that we are a perfect contrast to the world; we have nothing in common with it morally. The world's joys are not ours and its interests are not ours. We are in new covenant relationship, Christ has written in our hearts; we are beholding the glory of the Lord. If I make a companion of an unconverted man, how can we go on together? The things that are so precious to me, filling my heart with divine light, are actually repulsive to him. I am beholding the glory of the Lord, and he is beholding the glory of man. If people go on with an unequal yoke they have quite forgotten their proper place. We are quite different persons from anyone else and we ought to remember it.

Rem "Shall two walk together except they be agreed?" Amos 3: 3.

Rem Nothing brings God's judgment so much as an unequal yoke. One has seen such miserable lives from marriage with the unconverted.

CAC The saddest cases I have ever known have been of that kind; the condition of things sometimes is so terrible that one can hardly find words to express it.

There is no spiritual prosperity if there is not a break in friendship with unconverted people; christians lose their joy and proper position if they go on with such friendships. There is a definite call to come out. God does not say, 'Wait till they leave you'. People have said to me, 'I cannot break away, my friend is so fond of me'. That will not do; God says, "Come out".

Rem It is very important, too, not to be in partnership with the unconverted. One has known christians who had to suffer to give it up.

CAC I think we ought to test all our companionships by whether there is real desire after Christ; we ought not to make companions otherwise. It is right to be courteous to everybody, kind and ready to serve, not repellent, but here it is the idea of a yoke. If I make a friend of one who is not the Lord's, it is a yoke, and if two are yoked together one cannot go any faster than the other. We are in Christ Jesus and in new creation. Now can you fancy a new creation person being yoked with an old creation person? It would be yoking together the ox and the ass, which is forbidden in Deuteronomy. There must be movement, you have to come out. You cannot, of course, break ties of relationship, but you have to be prepared to part company with such. The first division amongst brethren was between Abraham and Lot; one liked to live on the hill-top with God, and the other down on the plains, so it came to a division. It is better to part company than to go on with those in the world.

Then we should come out with dignity. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they did not come out as a rabble; they went "arrayed" (five in a rank, see note) "out of the land of Egypt", Exodus 13: 18 — six hundred thousand men marching in military order. That is how saints should separate, not rushing out anyhow! Look at Isaiah 52: 11 - 12: "Depart, depart, go out from thence, touch not what is unclean; go out of the midst of her, be ye clean, that bear the vessels of Jehovah. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight; for Jehovah will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear-guard". You go out in military triumph, you do not sneak out! One sometimes sees people sneak out, that is, they try to avoid their old companions. No, that will not do; tell them about it. I never had any trouble to get away from my unconverted companions; they used to go down a side street to avoid me! You go out with a high hand — "Jehovah will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear-guard". What a vanguard and what a rearguard! You go out with a sense that God is before you, and behind you;

you are not afraid of anybody, and you are not afraid of the consequences. You go out with dignity.

Rem God speaks of us as sons and daughters, lest we should fear suffering.

CAC Yes, this is parental care, not heavenly relationship. If we need extra care we shall get it. The daughters represent the weaker side; if there is special need, there will be special care; it is well to come under the grace of it. There was a special case when Phoebe was sent to Rome and Paul writes, "I commend to you Phoebe, our sister" — 'You business people, help her in everything she has in hand!' That is what I call parental care.

Rem We cannot count on parental care unless we are separate.

CAC That is an important point. We leave the resources of Egypt like the children of Israel, but then we find God. God could sustain them where there was no natural resource; they had bread from heaven and the rock to drink from; their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell. When we come out we can come into and enjoy this wonderful reciprocity — "I will be their God, and they shall be to me a people"; God is delighting in His people and His people are delighting in Him.

Rem There is the persecution side.

CAC Undoubtedly, but it is all gain because you begin to prove for the first time that God is a reality. No young believer finds his feet till he has proved God for himself. It is a wonderful thing to find that God is as good as His word. You test Him and you will see. The Lord says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you", Matthew 6: 33. If you are on that line you are set to prove how He can preserve and keep you; all these things are added to you, you have not lost anything, you have gained. J.B.S. used to say, 'Peter said, We have left all and followed Thee. Yes, Peter, and you did very well by it!' No christian makes any progress if he does not act on the principle of verse 17. Many of us can look back and see our spiritual start was when we made a move, however small; it might only be speaking to a companion. We all had links and we had to break them and come out, and we made no start till we did. "Ye are the temple of God"

— wonderful words! What is so blessed is that God dwells among His saints and walks among them. It is not that we ought to be, but that we are the temple of God. In Exodus He dwells among them and in Leviticus He walks among them.

Ques What is the thought of walking?

CAC It is God's activities. The saints are the place of His rest and the place of His activities. God rests in the saints; He dwells there, He has a place of rest among His people:

'Our God whom we have known,
Well known in Jesus' love,
Rests in the blessing of His own
Before Himself above'. (72:1)

Then He walks (Leviticus 26: 12); His activities are there. If you want to see the activities of God you must look at the saints; He walks among His people. Suppose you see a saint coming out, that is God's activity; it is God moving in a soul and that makes it so interesting. God says, "Come out"; it is I that have to move, but God moves in me.

Rem In verse 16 it is, "I will be their God", and in verse 18 it is, "I will be to you for a Father". It is all a Father's care, as we prove in our experience.

CAC I am sure everyone who has tried it has proved it. The "Almighty" is a remarkable title. It is brought in as a special encouragement. He can do everything; nothing baffles Him, He is almighty. An old woman once said, 'I have no resource now but the Almighty', as if she were very badly off! We could not be better off if the Almighty is our Father. God is in His holy habitation and we are the shrine. God has His temple in the saints and has the most tender parental care over the weak, that is, the daughters. In Deuteronomy we read of three classes,

widows, fatherless and strangers, and there are ten different occasions mentioned where God makes special provision for them. Sometimes we feel we are in trying circumstances of a kind that no one has had before. Well, there is a special parental care; if a saint is in special need, he gets special care.

Paul lost everything when he was converted. His parents were wealthy people; they could afford to send him a long journey from Tarsus to Jerusalem to the finest university known. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel, a renowned doctor of law who, I suppose, would have been like the Regius Professor of Divinity! Yet Paul says, "On account of whom I have suffered the loss of all". They might have said to him, 'You must have felt that, Paul'. 'Oh no', he would say, 'I count them to be filth'. Paul had proved what God could be to him.

2 CORINTHIANS 7 (FIRST READING)

2 Corinthians 7:1-16

CAC We have noticed before that these epistles regard the saints as identified with the tabernacle of the testimony; they are a priestly company. I think verse 1 of this chapter answers to the laver.

The object of the Spirit of God in these two epistles was to bring saints into priestly condition; if we were in the good of them we should be consecrated as priests. The saints were not in priestly condition in the first epistle; they had not gone beyond being washed: "Ye have been washed", 1 Corinthians 6: 11. They were like the priests standing at the door of the tabernacle; they had got no further in consecration. But in this second epistle we get the beautiful garments and the anointing.

Rem Real separation would lead to sanctification,

"Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us purify ourselves".

CAC Yes, it follows on what has been brought out; the saints have been put in such a marvellous position. Before the apostle speaks of separation or cleansing he gives this wonderful touch of the dignity and blessedness of their position. He puts the beauty of our God on them in chapter 3 and the beauty of Christ on them in chapter 5. Moses said in Psalm 90: 17, "Let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us". Chapter 3 is the answer to Moses' prayer; saints behold the glory of the Lord and are changed into the same image. It is for testimony that we might be for God in this world. The glory of God is shining out in a Mediator and saints looking at it are changed; that belongs to the priestly company. In chapter 5 the beauty of Christ, the anointed Man, is upon the saints before God in reconciliation; they are brought where there is no stain or spot, nothing but Christ. This is like the priestly garments; if we do not come into it we shall not be qualified for priestly service. All must be in correspondence with Christ. If Christ is everything, if you have the best robe on before God, you cannot go about in rags before men. Whatever is out of accord with Christ is filthiness on the hand or foot of the priest, so he must be constantly coming to the laver. Verse 1 of this chapter is like the priests coming to the laver; it is what we do. In the first epistle, "Ye are washed" is what God has done. It is like the priests being washed by Moses outside the door of the tabernacle (Exodus 29: 4), but here in verse 1 we are to do it ourselves: "Let us purify ourselves". There are two sorts of cleansing — first by blood, which cleanses in the sight of God, and then by water, the application of divine testimony to the soul.

Ques Was the cleansing continual?

CAC Yes, the priests were to wash when they entered the tabernacle or when they approached the altar to offer; it was an everlasting statute. Twice over it is said, "That they may not die", Exodus 30: 21; it is very solemn. The laver was the last thing mentioned in God's instructions to Moses; He began with the ark and ended with the laver.

Ques No dimensions are given. Why is that?

CAC I suppose the cleansing is unlimited; it is for "every pollution of flesh and spirit", and it was to be for an everlasting statute. There is unlimited cleansing and it is never to be neglected. Neglect of washing leads to downfall. People come to meetings without washing, and even take part in service about holy things without washing, and it is very dangerous; spiritual life declines and a man dies after that.

Rem It is cleansing for the spirit as well as the flesh.

CAC Yes, that is very searching; the pollutions of the spirit are very real. Paul was a transparent man; he tells us in chapter 12 that he had to have a thorn for the flesh, "that I might not be exalted"; that would have been filthiness of spirit. He was caught up to heaven and was entirely absorbed; he did not know whether he was in the body or out of it. Then when he comes down the flesh says to him, 'What a wonderful man you are, no one has been there but you!' Think of Paul telling us he was not past that danger; he would have been exalted but for the thorn! We should not normally like to let people know that such an element of weakness was in us! If we do not judge things in private, they will come out in public. J.B.S. used to say, 'If you do not commit suicide in private, you will be hanged in public!' Then there might be a feeling of envy if someone had more gift or prominence than we had; that would be filthiness of spirit.

Rem We should only be glad for another to have gift.

CAC Yes, but the flesh would not be glad. If another has gift, it is all for my benefit, it is mine; the more you have, the more I gain.

It is very important for us to look into the perfect law of liberty. The laver was made of the women's looking glasses; if we really come to the laver we see our blemishes, the proper use of a looking-glass is to see blemishes.

Rem I thought it was generally used for vanity.

CAC People may use it that way because man makes a wrong use of everything, but the proper use of a looking-glass is to show blemishes. James

complains that a man looks at himself in a glass and straightway forgets he is not like Christ; he should have gone away and been exercised that he was so unlike Christ, but instead he goes away and forgets what manner of man he is. The looking-glass is the perfect law of liberty; you see the Lord Jesus Christ in it for He always *delighted* to do the will of God. You can fix your earnest gaze on Him and see everything that is in contrast in yourself. Are we exercised that everything should go that is not like Christ? Everything else is a pollution, whether it is on the hand or foot, whether it comes into service or life, and we have to see to it that we cleanse ourselves from it.

Ques Is it like putting off the old man?

CAC It is on the same line. The christian is supposed to have put off the old man. It is taking up a new position, like a German becoming naturalised as an Englishman; he has put off the old man.

Ques. Are all priests?

CAC All are called to be, all are partakers of a priestly calling.

Rem We are to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

CAC It is most important for a priest, is it not? We could not go on with God and keep something that Christ died to put away. It would be terrible to bring to God what Christ has died to put away.

Rem "Happy is the man that feareth always", Proverbs 28: 14. Some think that fear does not characterise christianity.

CAC Surely the fear of God does. If we are not walking in the fear of God we are walking in sin.

Ques Would that be fear in the sense of reverence?

CAC Yes, grace never produces carelessness or want of reverence. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared", Psalm 130: 4. Paul could say, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling", 1 Corinthians 2: 3. These were priestly sensibilities and affections; he was not afraid of them but of himself, lest anything should come in to hinder his carrying out his service in priestly sensibilities. In all this epistle Paul was labouring that what had been made good in him should be made good in the saints.

Then Paul was greatly concerned that there should be complete restoration of confidence. There had been a breach, not on his side, but a breach of confidence on the side of the Corinthians; Paul was so troubled he said, "Our flesh had no rest" (verse 5). He had such great exercise that he could not stop

in Troas; he crossed the sea from Asia Minor to Europe; he took a troublesome journey to meet Titus. It is the yearning of priestly affection. God came in with encouragement for his service. God is the source of salvation in chapter 6, and the source of encouragement in chapter 7. Often in the service of the Lord servants are brought very low, but when the lowest point is reached Titus comes along. It is beautiful that Paul speaks so freely of his joy. We do not let out what we feel, but the apostle lets out all the feelings of his heart; there is perfect transparency. You can see all that is in his heart; he does not keep it in the dark; it is so genuine it will bear the light. In reading Scripture I have often thought that we have lost a good deal of the simplicity of christianity. How freely the apostle expresses himself, and how freely Scripture speaks of different saints and servants! We have lost that. The sense of failure and the consciousness of what the flesh is have straitened our affections and we are afraid to express ourselves, but we should gain if we spoke more freely of our exercises. We find often that saints live together in the same meeting, and even in the same house, and know little of each other's exercises and spiritual joys. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man", Proverbs 27: 19; saints have all gone the same road and had the same exercises, so we can help one another; if we were more free we should gain by it.

Rem James says, "Confess therefore your offences to one another", James 5: 16.

CAC Of course christians would do that.

Paul had even repented writing a letter inspired by the Holy Spirit. That shows his exercise; he was so troubled that he was afraid he had said too much or put it too strongly. He thought it might make a final breach between them.

Ques Was not that strange that Paul should repent of writing an inspired letter?

CAC That is the beauty of it! When God takes up a servant He does not take him up as an iron vessel but as a living one, and makes him go through great exercises. The prophets in Old Testament times had to go through tremendous exercises in connection with their service. A man might write a severe letter and it would cost him more to write it than it cost people to receive it. So it was with the apostle; it cost him more to write and send that letter than it cost the Corinthians to receive it. They had been grieved in a godly way. The apostle was not happy to think of their being grieved, but it had all worked in a right way; it was sorrow according to God. There are three things — godly sorrow, repentance and salvation. They all go together but they are separate things. You could have godly sorrow without repentance, and both without

salvation. Godly sorrow is like Peter weeping bitterly, a deep sense as to the wrong, whatever it is. This leads to repentance — true self-judgment, refusal in mind of the evil so that one does not cherish or hold on to it; in mind one has broken with it. Then the power of God comes in for complete deliverance from it; that is salvation. What we get here is a contrast to chapter 6. There you are set to bring forth fruit; you pray and God's salvation comes in that Christ may come out practically in you. In this chapter self has been before one, self-gratification, so the first step is deep grief that one has allowed the flesh, then repentance and salvation. The same point is reached but from a different standpoint. In chapter 7 you start with a humbling sense of failure and then you reach salvation. In chapter 6 you start with Christ, and that is the best way, but most of us reach salvation as in chapter 7. It is better to begin with Christ.

The Corinthians proved themselves to be pure; they had got rid of the leaven. When evil has come in among the saints divine love can never rest; Paul said in chapter 2, "I had no rest". Divine love never rests till things are put right and the point of salvation and purity is reached — "Ye have proved yourselves to be pure".

Ques Was it restoration of heart towards the apostle?

CAC There were three things that worked together. Firstly, there were the relations of the saints to wicked persons which had to be adjusted: the saints had to come into a proper attitude to the wicked person. Secondly, they were in a bad state all round; they were "puffed up" and leaven was working in the whole company and it had to be got rid of. It was comparatively an easy matter to put away a wicked person, but much more difficult for each one to purge out leaven from his own soul. Thirdly, the enemy had been working to create a breach between the Corinthians and the vessel of divine ministry; if the enemy could do that, he had gained his point. This was most serious, and the apostle spends more time over it than over all the others. He spends chapter after chapter trying to remove the breach. Paul was a special vessel of testimony and if people were separated from him they lost everything distinctive of christianity; they lost the real blessing and virtue of christianity. Paul was delighted when Titus came back and said how they loved him. It was not a question of the man that did the wrong, or of people being puffed up, but Paul says, 'It all happened that it might appear how you loved me and I loved you'. They did love Paul at bottom; certain wretched men had diverted them for a time, but they did love him and Titus comes back and tells him so.

Paul is so transparent; he lets out all his exercises. 'I have said a few things about you to Titus', he says, 'and I was afraid you might not turn out as I

said!’ The apostle’s exercises had been answered by a special working of God. Paul had gone through tremendous travail of soul and God had answered his exercises, so that he can finish by saying he has perfect confidence in them: “I rejoice that in everything I am confident as to you”. On Paul’s side confidence was fully restored.

Satan is always labouring to destroy confidence in any servants who have a distinctive ministry; he labours to bring in some breach of confidence, because he sees that is the most effective way of defeating the Lord. The Lord has raised up a ministry for the comfort and help and encouragement of the saints and Satan labours to defeat it.

The enemy was clearly defeated at Corinth and my impression is that it was through the exercises of the apostle. He went through such anguish and God came in in answer to it and defeated the enemy.

2 CORINTHIANS 7 (SECOND READING)

2 Corinthians 7:1-16

Rem It was a great joy to the apostle to see his children recovering as a result of his first letter.

CAC Yes. We might learn from this how the Lord's heart yearns over us, to see us free for spiritual prosperity. If the Lord sees a little move with us it is a great joy to Him. Paul says, "Ye are in our hearts, to die together, and live together". I suppose that is the right order.

Rem It has the spiritual aspect of living in view.

CAC Yes.

Ques Why did he say, "Receive us"?

CAC I suppose it is a reference to the unprofitable men they had received, who had really injured and ruined and made gain of them. The apostles were not on that line.

Ques Would "combats" refer to something outside, or to trouble in the assembly?

CAC I should think it might refer to both; in Macedonia there were outward difficulties, and there was this great burden on Paul's spirit about Corinth, "within fears". It is very beautiful that he speaks of God as "he who encourages those that are brought low", as though it were a characteristic feature of God, referring of course to those who were brought low in exercise about the assembly; that was what brought Paul low.

Rem I wonder why all the variety of his exercises has been allowed to be recorded here.

CAC He is bringing out his own earnest care for them, which they had lost sight of. They had given themselves up to other influences. The apostle was not a man that moved along quite superior to everything. He felt things very keenly.

Rem His feelings are very diverse in this chapter, joy and grief and so on. He seems to be able to separate out his mixed feelings.

CAC When Titus came back and told him about the letter, it was a cause of very great joy; he could hardly contain himself.

Rem He rejoiced because they had "been grieved to repentance".

CAC Yes; the first letter he wrote was an inspired letter, and then he regretted having written it in case it might have made a complete break between him and them. A servant may speak in the power of the Spirit faithfully and needfully, and then perhaps he may feel afterwards that he has said too much. Well, the apostle may have had exercises of that sort.

Rem Such exercises would give us a true balance for the sake of the truth ministered.

CAC I am sure that is right. No true servant would have wished to grieve people simply for the sake of doing so.

Rem Receiving a letter like this would be a test. Sometimes we do not like the reproof!

CAC When we do not like it, it shews we needed it!

Rem He speaks of it as "grief according to God"; he seems to analyse it. How the apostle was in the good of 1 Corinthians 13, for it was really love that produced all these fine feelings and sensibilities!

CAC And it is something like the first exercises of the soul in repentance when converted. When God first took us in hand, it produced godly sorrow, sorrow for the life I lived; then repentance came about and then salvation. It is the same kind of thing whenever a soul meets fresh exercise. It is the exercise repeated that we had when we were converted at the beginning; there is sorrow, repentance and salvation; that is the moral order. Repentance is that we see we have been wrong. If a christian gets light from God that certain things he has been going on with are wrong, are displeasing to God, he repents. Well, repentance is that we change our outlook on things. It is continual and should be deepening with us. As we go on we should repent more fully and deeply than we ever did before.

They had been giving up all the great truths of christianity, fellowship, the Lord's supper, the Spirit and the truth of the body. When they saw that they had turned away from all the apostle had brought before them, they repented in godly sorrow and had salvation from all those things that had so led them astray. Then we see that this being grieved according to God leads to great activity of soul for it wrought in them much diligence, indignation, fear, ardent desire, zeal and vengeance. That is, it was a tremendous reality to them, it affected them deeply. "What excusing of yourselves" would mean they had been letting things pass, even the gravest moral disorder and corruption; and when the apostle's letter came they realised that things so displeasing to God could no longer be allowed to pass. They put zeal and energy into it.

Rem Verse 12 is very remarkable.

CAC The apostle is referring to the same case he had called attention to in his first epistle, but he was not so concerned about the case itself as that the Corinthians should be convinced of his diligent zeal for them being manifested. He would have them to recognise what was working in his mind and heart.

Rem "Ye have proved yourselves to be pure in the matter". The fact of the spiritual result for the assembly is more important than the case in question.

CAC Yes, and it is an important matter that when the Lord brings evil to light there should be sufficient care and concern to deal with it in a divine way, in such a way that the holiness of God's house is maintained.

Rem The divine thought is that the offender should be recovered.

CAC The offender was apparently brought into deep sorrow, because there was a danger that he should be "swallowed up with excessive grief", 2 Corinthians 2: 7.

Rem It was not a single instance, but a leaven among them.

CAC Yes; he says he feared lest at his coming he should have to "grieve over many of those who have sinned before, and have not repented", 2 Corinthians 12: 21. As you say, it was a leaven in the whole lump.

Rem So he said, "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump", 1 Corinthians 5: 7.

CAC And purging out the old leaven was not getting rid of the wicked person, it was getting rid of the element working in them all.

Ques Does "before God" in verse 12 imply that all that was done by the apostle was done consciously before God?

CAC Yes. He would have it manifested to them that it was godly jealousy, not that he merely wanted his own way in the matter.

Rem He refers to the spirit of Titus and later to the "heart of Titus".

CAC The apostle was evidently in the habit of speaking well of the saints. He had not run the Corinthians down to Titus; he had boasted of them. He had said so much in their favour that he was exceedingly pleased when it turned out to be true. The letter, which was the ministry of the word, had produced a complete change of everything with them. They were being worldly and losing all the character of the assembly, and through the use of the word they were recovered. There is no reason to despair of anybody until they absolutely reject the word.

Rem What an example of the power to repent David is, and he was a godly saint!

CAC Sometimes when we see a christian doing something dreadful, we are inclined to think he will never be any good again. But David became greater spiritually after his dreadful sin than before, and I suppose his exercises greatly deepened the work of God in his soul. But we need to look at these things as God looks at them.

Rem The way in which a thing is done is of great importance, the spirit in which discipline is exercised.

CAC So that evil coming into the assembly should bring out the best and most spiritual qualities there are in the saints. No doubt this resulted in the false apostles being judged and sent about their business. They would lose their influence entirely.

We see the beautiful yearnings of divine love brought into exercise by the very disorders. It is as though it provided an occasion for the exercise of divine love. That is the first thought suggested to us in the Bible. In Genesis 1 we get the first movements of God in a scene of disorder and chaos, when "the earth was waste and empty". The first thing was that the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the deep. The Spirit of God comes in to move with feeling over a scene of chaos in order to bring about restoration and something which should be for God's pleasure. God delights in the restoration of what has departed from Him. Well, it was the same thing at Corinth, it was like the Spirit of God hovering in feeling and tender sensibility over a scene of chaos,

and God worked so that something was brought about for His pleasure. How one would like to bring in something like that.

2 CORINTHIANS 8

2 Corinthians 8:1-24

CAC I suppose this is a continuation of the second beseeching — “We also beseech that ye receive not the grace of God in vain”, 2 Corinthians 6: 1. God loves to make His grace appear in a practical way amongst His saints; if it does not appear we have received it in vain. It would seem from the opening of this chapter that the grace of God shines in contrary circumstances. The grace of God is not dependent on favourable circumstances or advantageous conditions. We read of “a great trial of affliction” and “abundance of their joy” being found together; and then it speaks of “deep poverty” and “riches of their free-hearted liberality” — these are not two things we naturally associate. The grace of God must be very wonderful to fill the heart with abounding joy even in a great trial of affliction, and to make a person in deep poverty abound in riches of liberality. It seems like a contradiction. We would think that people in deep poverty ought to be ministered to. It shows that the grace of God shines out when there seems least to help it.

Rem Like the widow with the two mites who excelled in giving.

CAC That is a very striking example. I have often thought that was the brightest day in the history of the temple. We have been told lately that she excelled even David and Solomon in giving.

Rem Undoubtedly Corinth was a wealthy assembly.

CAC Yes, there were probably many there who could have bought up all the poor assemblies in Macedonia. It is remarkable how these assemblies come to the front — Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and perhaps Nicopolis; they were poor companies but they were very bright.

Rem Not only abounding in love but in grace; it is a great test to show grace to one another.

CAC Grace is expressed in a practical way. Someone hearing of a case of need said, ‘Poor things, I do feel for them’, and another said, ‘How much do you feel for them? I feel a sovereign’. There is a difference between grace and love. Grace is love in activity; it is shown to each other. Grace is a sort of bond. There was a paper once written, ‘Grace, the Power of Unity and Gathering’; there is a good deal in the title. It was written as a companion book to ‘Separation from Evil God’s Principle of Unity’. Someone said that there must be something besides separation, so the author wrote the second paper. The great exercise of Paul was that the Jew and gentile should be practically bound together by this ministry of help.

Ques Did their affliction become an incentive to bind them together?

CAC The need of the saints became the occasion for binding together. There were evidently different occasions when there was need in Judaea. The saints there had sold their possessions and goods to give to those who had need, so that they had not much to fall back on when distress came; thus the gentile brethren had the opportunity of ministering to them. It was all to be in a spirit of grace, a free-will offering. The apostle does not make it an obligation in a legal way on the Corinthians; it was not that they were compelled to do it. He wanted it all done before he came so that it might not seem “as got out of you”, 2 Corinthians 9: 5. He was so anxious that his Corinthian children should not get behind. What a variety of motives he brings to bear! He uses the example of other saints to move their hearts. He does not speak by commandment, but puts it before them as an opportunity to show the genuineness of their love. It is the principle of a vow. A vow in the Old Testament was not part of the righteous requirement of the law, it was an outlet for a devoted heart, an outlet for devotion to God. In the same way Paul is providing them with an outlet as a privilege. If a man took a vow it was because he loved the Lord and wished to be in a special way for the Lord. It is a small matter to give money if you have given yourself; the willingness of the saints in Macedonia went beyond what the apostle had even hoped: “Not according as we hoped, but they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us by God’s will”. I have thought that Psalm 110 is specially applicable to the present time. It speaks of Christ sitting at God’s right hand and addresses him as Priest for ever. Then in verse 3 it speaks of the saints as willing or voluntary offerings (see note to verse 3). That is like this verse here. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in holy splendour: from the womb of the morning shall come to thee the dew of thy youth”, Psalm 110: 3. How lovely that is! When Israel comes to the morning of the day of their salvation that is what they will be in all the beauty of holiness and in the freshness of first love; in all the freshness of morning dew they will be brought forth. We have our day of salvation now before they get theirs. The gentile saints have the privilege now of being voluntary offerings and of coming out in the beauty of holiness, as we were reading last week, and in the freshness of affection, that is the dew of youth. Christ is at God’s right hand in abiding devotedness to His saints as Priest for ever, and now saints are here to be voluntary offerings in holy splendour and in the freshness of affection that delights to be for Him. We see this in 2 Corinthians 8 — saints giving themselves to the Lord and, of course, all they have goes with it. If I give myself I give all that I have.

Rem The widow gave all that she had.

CAC I do not think God would have suffered the old dispensation to close without proving that He could have one person in this world to love Him with all her heart. This is very important. We often dwell on the giving on the divine side but perhaps not enough on the giving on our side, the giving of ourselves; if it is left out we leave out a very important part of truth. The Lord said, "Wheresoever these glad tidings may be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her", Matthew 26: 13. She had expended everything she had on Him and He says, 'When you tell people how devoted I am to you, tell them how devoted the woman was to Me'.

Rem Paul says, "Do ye not know that ... ye are not your own? for ye have been bought with a price", 1 Corinthians 6: 19, 20.

CAC There the obligation is insisted on as a matter of righteousness; the price has been paid and the goods are to be delivered! But here it is not righteousness, but grace and love. In the first epistle they were not in a good state, so he insists on righteousness and tells them that the price has been paid, but in 2 Corinthians their hearts were captivated and they were constrained by love to give themselves. They surpassed even the apostle's hopes, they had done more than he expected. He does not need there to tell them that the goods have been paid for and should be delivered!

We ought to be exercised as to being spiritually complete: "Even as ye abound in every way, in faith, and word, and knowledge, and all diligence, and in love from you to us, that ye may abound in this grace also". The Corinthians were not complete though they had fine qualities. It reminds one of Paul's appeal to the Philippians: "If then there be any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and compassions", Philippians 2: 1. Paul had proved these things to be in the Philippians. 'Now', he says, 'go on a little further' — "fulfil my joy", 'I want to see you knit together'. He speaks of their being "complete as regards the fruit of righteousness" (Philippians 1: 11) not lacking in any quality.

Rem This grace was to be for the glory of the Lord (verse 19) not only for the benefit done.

CAC The binding together of saints by practical grace would be greatly to the glory of the Lord. It should be an exercise to us that in all that we do or write we should act for the binding together, not for the dividing or separating of saints. Saints unconsciously do things for the dividing of each other. It is for the glory of the Lord if we are bound together.

Rem Verses 20 and 21 are striking. We should be careful that no reproach should be brought on the testimony.

CAC Yes, it would come in specially in dealing about money. Men do not understand grace and love, but they understand money. It needs care that things should be done without reproach.

Ques Does Paul use verse 9 as an incentive to quicken their hearts? "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes he, being rich, became poor, in order that ye by his poverty might be enriched".

CAC The One possessed of all had given up all; they owed everything to the One who had given up all His possessions.

Rem One of the Psalms speaks of the poor man — never such a poor man walked the earth.

CAC Yes, we do not know that the Lord ever had a penny. He had to ask to see one, and when it was a matter of paying taxes He got it out of a fish's mouth. There was no self in the blessed Lord; with us self is so strong. The grace of God never shines more than in overcoming our natural selfishness of heart. The greatest miracle ever seen in this world was at Pentecost; there were five thousand people together and not one said that anything of what he possessed was his own. It would have been wonderful to see five together like that, but five thousand! They sold all they had and distribution was made. I have had a thought that perhaps we may come back to this state at the close of the history of the church; conditions may be such that the same thing may come about, and saints may be in such distress that those who have means could have the privilege of giving it up for their brethren. What a waste of the saints' money if it were left behind for the beast! None of us would like to leave our money behind for the devil, we would rather spend it on the saints. If one is under the care of God there is no lack (verse 14), and God's principle is one of equality. If there is a lack, somebody has abundance; that is how God works it among His people. He allowed this time of poverty and provided that other companies of saints should have something to spare just like the manna; when they gathered it, it was all equalised. However hard and diligently a man worked he had not more than would fill his omer, and when a man had gathered a very little, how surprised he must have been to find his omer full.

Rem It is very interesting to see how God put "the same diligent zeal for you in the heart of Titus".

CAC Titus was in the same spirit as the apostle. This contribution of the gentiles was not a small thing; it was the fruit, the crown and seal of Paul's

ministry; it was the truth of the one body in practical shape. We might have said, 'What is all this fuss about? Could not Quartus or any obscure saint carry the money? Why should this unnamed brother who had such a reputation and was such a fine gospel preacher be sent with it?' We often do not see what is behind a little thing. It might be that the whole truth of christianity is involved; it was in this little gift of money. It was a question if Jew and gentile were really joined together in one body; it was being worked out practically for the binding together of Jew and gentile. There was the greatest care taken and the assemblies chose men to go with the gift, and those who carried it were the "messengers of assemblies, Christ's glory". This contribution brought out the character of Christ in the assemblies. Paul does not say 'the assembly', but "assemblies". It is not the church looked at in abstract unity but these poor companies in Macedonia, and the apostle says they are Christ's glory. The character of Christ was coming out in them; the fact that they had made this contribution was the character of Christ coming out. It makes one wonder if there is anything in this town that Paul could say was Christ's glory.

2 CORINTHIANS 10

2 Corinthians 10:1-18

Ques Do you think we may gather from this chapter that the grace and lowliness of the apostle had been taken advantage of by the Corinthians?

CAC I thought that the very absence of self-assertion in the apostle had been used to belittle him by those who wanted a place for themselves; he felt that he had to vindicate his own ministry and service though he felt that he was a fool all the time but it was for the good of their souls. To think little of the apostle was to think little of his ministry. I suppose that the effort of the enemy is that the vessel may be disregarded and, in that way, the ministry is brought into neglect. He does not force the matter but brings out the beautiful tenderness of divine grace which, when it comes into the world, comes in in this beseeching manner. It is really the whole spirit of Christ; He invites us to Himself as One that is meek and lowly in heart; it is really the essential spirit of christianity. I suppose there was authority to deal with what was lawless. He does speak about his rod of apostolic power that he could apply to those that were lawless, but he did not wish to have to use it. He was looking to separate the saints morally from the disorderly spirits that had got in amongst them. It was like 2 Timothy 2: 21, "separating himself from them".

I think that in this second epistle there was a certain measure of uneasiness with the apostle lest he should not find all he desired. There was a good deal of exercise going on but he was able to discern that they had not bottomed the matter. There is a great difference between people that are going wrong and those that are going right. In the main the Corinthians were going right but there was a lot yet to be put right. Things were not absolutely right or wrong; there is always more or less right and wrong with us and he was free to tell them so. He yearns over them; all his fears about them were the outcome of his love. His desire was that all should be led to the obedience of the Christ.

The apostle is engaged in this warfare in order that he might win the field for God. It seems to me that the enemy was seeking to get a footing among these saints so that there might be something in the assembly that was opposed to the knowledge of God. There should be nothing in the assembly but what is of Christ. He says that he was of Christ. I think that Paul had in view that certain men were really servants of Satan. The principle applies that if we allow reasonings and high thoughts we shall not arrive at the knowledge of God. It is such a wonderful thing that the obedience of Christ is to characterize the saints. In a certain way we have to fight this fight ourselves;

things arise in our minds that have to be put down and not allowed. If I apprehend my own measure rightly I shall know that I have, everything to learn. I have to be a learner and not a reasoner. When we are simple and going on in the fear of God it is very easy to discern what is of the flesh and what is of the Spirit. It is very remarkable that the apostle should begin by speaking of himself as a christian and not as an apostle. He sets himself before them as a christian first.

They were not on the line that he was on, "We henceforth know no one according to flesh", 2 Corinthians 5: 16. They did not measure things spiritually but in a fleshly way. We ought to weigh things and consider what their spiritual substance is. This is important in service and in ministry. Some at Corinth evidently thought that the apostle had no business to interfere in their local matters; they considered that they were quite capable of looking after their own affairs. If we were always careful not to go beyond our own measure we should often save ourselves trouble.

Ques What is the rule which is referred to in verse 13?

CAC I thought that it had been ruled by the God of measure that the apostle should reach to them. It was apportioned that the apostle should win this assembly for Christ, but now other men had come in and said, 'This is a fine field for us to magnify ourselves'. I think that without any spiritual power they were trading on the apostle's work. What could these modern infidels do in a heathen country? It is all very well for them to trade on what is ready to hand. I thought that the apostle was bringing all this out to show the difference between a true servant and a false. I think it was a shame that they had not reckoned them up long before this. If we are really boasting in the Lord we should not want to commend ourselves. If I am boasting in the Lord I can be content that He should commend me.

They had hindered the apostle before when they were in a bad state and now he looks that they may help him by their good state. It is very gracious of him to speak thus. It is not for want of understanding now that we go wrong; it is because we do not pay attention. We talk of sinners being 'gospel hardened' but we are very much like them ourselves; we do not always allow the Lord to search us and to try us. What the apostle had committed to the Lord was the whole vindication of his service; he could leave it to the Lord.

2 CORINTHIANS 11 (FIRST READING)

2 Corinthians 11:1-5

CAC Paul speaks here of "jealousy which is of God" (verse 2). It is priestly jealousy. In the previous chapters he presents priestly anointing, priestly raiment, the priestly spirit, and here priestly jealousy, on which the covenant of priesthood depends. Priestly jealousy would not tolerate anything that corrupts the people of God. God says of Phinehas in Numbers 25: "He was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Therefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace! And he shall have it, and his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was jealous for his God". That is, the covenant of priesthood depends on jealousy for God. These men at Corinth were doing the same thing as that on which Phinehas executed judgment; they were seeking to corrupt the saints. Phinehas executed judgment on the corrupters; he considered only for God, and for the people in relation to God, and that is the foundation of priesthood. Paul said, "I am jealous as to you with a jealousy which is of God". If we have not that we shall be cut off from the priesthood.

Eli was not jealous for God; he was not of the seed of Phinehas; only those of the seed of Phinehas can be priests. God said of him: "He shall have it, and his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood". There are no other priests. We must be either of Phinehas or of Eli, and God says, 'I have cut off Eli'. Eli had worthless sons, and he let them do what they liked; he was not jealous for God. If he had been of the seed of Phinehas he would have executed judgment on them. If I honour anyone more than God, I am not of Phinehas. Abiathar was the last of Eli's seed, and he had to go; he did not disappear until Solomon's day, and the Spirit of God remarks on it (1 Kings 2: 27). God removed all the seed of Eli, and then Zadok, a faithful priest, is put in their place. Paul was like Zadok, a faithful priest in the house of God, and he preserves all that is for Christ. "I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind; and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed continually", 1 Samuel 2: 35. It is striking that he walks before God's anointed. He walks before Christ and will not tolerate anything that takes the saints away from Christ. That is the whole pith of this chapter.

Paul speaks of presenting the saints as a chaste virgin to Christ. He could say, "I have espoused you"; no one else could have spoken thus; he had a special place in the sovereignty of God that no one else had. The God of measure had

measured out to him this privileged service at Corinth, and he had come to them in the glad tidings of the Christ, as he tells them in chapter 10. It is clear that the special place that Paul had was in question at Corinth. The effect of his ministry was that a definite relationship had been established between these souls and Christ — a definite bond. He says, "I have espoused you"; it is not 'married', but there was a definite understanding involving that the saints, like Rebecca, had said, "I will go". Paul had brought the proposal and they had accepted it. It is a great moment when the saints take the ground of being espoused to one Man. It is as a chaste virgin, for the saints are to be free from the influence of all but one Man. As long as they were under Paul's influence, everything was confirming them as to "simplicity as to the Christ". The enemy had brought along teachers who seemed to surpass Paul, but they were taking away the saints from "simplicity as to the Christ", and priestly jealousy was awakened in Paul.

The saints are not only to be separate from the world, but from the subtle influences that work in our thoughts. He says, "lest ... your thoughts should be corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ". Worldliness would follow; this is something more subtle than the devil offering them all the pleasures and good things of the world. These false apostles were apparently very good men, beautiful preachers; they talked so sweetly. They put thoughts into the minds of the saints that corrupted them; that was the effect of their ministry. It is not the influence of the world, but Satan working by these men, spoiling Paul's ministry by putting thoughts into the saints' minds that are not of the one Man, but in a subtle way bring in another man. "I have espoused you unto one man!" If we could only have stamped on our hearts, and carry there as a seal, *one Man!* That is christianity.

Satan was not now tempting them to gross vices; he had tried that before at Corinth, as we see in the first epistle. He had tempted them on degrading lines, but self-judgment had come in and they were delivered from gross evil. Now it is spiritual error — Satan says, 'I will help you to be very good and holy'. It is similar to what Judas suggested in John 12, where even the eleven were carried away for the moment by it. It sounded very plausible. What good three hundred pence could do! But Mary shows what it is to be espoused to one Man. Judas represents the false apostle, Satan's man, the religious man. No doubt he was the most respectable man among the twelve, selected to be the treasurer. He was probably the only true Jew among them, so he added status to them. The others were Galileans, whom the Jews despised. It was said to Peter as a reproach, "Thou art a Galilean", Mark 14: 70. The difference between Jews and Galileans is clearly marked in the gospels. So these false teachers at Corinth could show wonderful credentials: "Are they Hebrews? ...

Are they Israelites? ... Are they seed of Abraham?" They came with all these credentials. This should put us on our guard against subtle influences that would commend what is religious to us. When Satan works he will suggest what will commend itself to our religious feelings and mind. How little do christians understand what is involved in the thought of "one man"! There are many attractive things that are not after Christ, but they are easily detected by the priest. When these false teachers came to be tested at Corinth, no doubt their character was seen as described in verse 20: "if any one bring you into bondage, if any one devour you, if any one get your money, if any one exalt himself, if any one beat you on the face". That was the character of these men, exalting themselves — a complete contrast to everything the saints had seen in Paul. It seemed good to the Spirit that Paul should point out the contrast, but he felt bad about doing it.

The espousal of the saints to Christ cost the apostle something. It was not merely an official act; he went through all these sufferings to bring it about. There was not only his jealousy as to the corrupting influences at Corinth, but Paul was also jealous in a positive way, so he would go through anything and everything to bring the saints into this blessed bond with a Man in heaven. After the Lord Himself, I do not think anyone will have so much pleasure as Paul in seeing the consummation of the union of the saints with Christ. This jealousy should extend into every mind; we have all to take it up if things are to be preserved for Christ. We must begin with ourselves. The saints rightly judge by what we *are*, not by what we *say*. These influences are the intrusion of the natural, so that we bring in and judge of things along natural lines. It is a subtle form of attack, but Paul was walking in the Spirit of Christ, and ready to cast a javelin through anything that would corrupt the people of God. There are influences that corrupt our thoughts. What we are thinking about is a very serious matter. Paul was "leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ", 2 Corinthians 10: 5. In Malachi we read of those who thought upon God's name, and "they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure", Malachi 3: 17.

What is really brought out here is that the saints are now put into secret relation with Christ, to be espoused to Him, to have a secret seal. Marriage is public; everyone will know then how we stand to Christ, but now there is a secret relation to Christ to be carried in the thoughts of the saints as a precious treasure. We want to preserve this virgin character. There will be no fear of corrupting influences when we meet Him, but now the snare is, as in the days of the apostle, the religious world and things which appear to be good. We are to preserve the virgin character by carrying in our thoughts the secret of our relations with Him.

2 CORINTHIANS 11 (SECOND READING)

2 Corinthians 11:1-33

CAC It is not in view of commending himself that the apostle speaks of himself. Indeed for their sakes he was willing to do what appeared to himself a foolish thing, so that he was ready to abase himself. He was showing them the character of a true minister. He shows them the way the love of Christ has wrought in himself. He has left his ministry for the moment and is talking of the minister. He saw the saints being turned aside to what was inferior and his godly jealousy moved him in all this. It all tends to bring about simplicity as to Christ and where that was the case he espoused them to one Man. The idea is that they would not have to do with any other man. The apostle had given them a start on the right line. With many believers now-a-days that point has hardly been reached.

Ques What stage is this in progress or growth?

CAC I thought the spirit of his ministry was the setting aside of every other man in the preaching of the cross. They had this blessed ministry that presented only Christ to them and the effort of the enemy was to corrupt their thoughts from the simplicity of the Christ. It is almost an unknown thing to saints today — being espoused to Christ, bound up with one Man, so that there is no other man, that He has no rival. It is that Christ is the exclusive object of faith and interest and affection. I think what the apostle laboured for was to make them exclusive. It is for all saints. It is thrown out as a reproach to some saints that they are exclusive brethren. It is not just a name that is tacked on to a certain body of christians; it is for all saints, every saint in this town belongs to exclusive brethren. All christians ought to be exclusive brethren, to be exclusively for Christ; that is what the apostle laboured for; that was the whole drift of his ministry. That we are very subject to influences is the lesson we can learn from all these corrective epistles; we very soon slip away from divine influence to a human influence. It is surprising how soon we get influenced. If people are under spiritual influence for years they take colour from what is ministered; if that ministry is removed and an inferior takes its place the saints soon fall under the influence of the inferior and in a few years one can hardly find a trace of the former ministry. It shows how soon we deteriorate; everything tends to deteriorate in the hands of man; it is much easier to deteriorate than to advance. Any means that Satan takes are very subtle; he does not come and say, 'I am Satan'. The work of God is a moral work; it works through the affections. He does not present a thing to us in an arbitrary way; He acts on our consciences and affections, but He does

not force us into any path. All is consistent with God's dealings with us as intelligent moral beings. The devil's constant effort is to get us away from Christ and that is the character of the test now; if Satan can get us away from Christ he has destroyed everything that is of God. We are kept in appreciation of Christ through exercise of conscience and heart. There is a positive ministry going on. We are not called to originate anything but to respond. The great response with us is to believe on His Son. God approaches us by His Son and His commandment is to believe on His Son. God is always telling you of Christ. It has often struck me as a remarkable thing about Eve that she seemed to have forgotten the tree of life; she speaks about the tree as if there were only one.

I think the power really is the commandment of God. If God commands a thing there is the power. The great thing is whether I pay attention to what God says to me. If God commands me to believe on His Son that is the power. The soul very often tries to work from its own side to God, but in the gospel God is working from His own side and brings it to me. If I believe on that one Man I get perfection before me and God has brought it to me. You really want to know about God and that is what there is in the soul of one born anew, he wants to know God's way of coming out in the midst of all the confusion that sin has brought in; you see that way perfectly in Christ. I suppose if we saw how Christ was wholly for us the effect would be that we should be wholly for Him; we should be engaged with simplicity as to the Christ and be as a chaste virgin for Him. In any point of failure we can hardly say that at that moment we were believing in Christ. All power and grace is by believing in Christ; practically we have to learn what we are.

Ques. As to our failures?

CAC When you have this miserable failure you are not believing in Christ at that moment. We have to find out how little we care to appropriate the resources of divine love; all those resources are for us! God in His grace overrules every failure and breakdown and uses it that we may learn that what He has shown us is true. In the cross He judges man after the flesh; there is no good in the first man, but we do not believe it and we have to go through humiliating exercises to understand that God is justified and cleared in judging it. "That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, be clear when thou judgest", Psalm 51: 4. Man in the flesh is rejected, we do not believe that and we have to go through humiliating experiences in order to prove that man in the flesh is a failure. Every experience of that kind makes me appreciate the death of Christ more. This is a very holy exercise, not a careless one; it is no light matter. A soul with God gets a better apprehension of the death of Christ

through failure than in any other way. You go right down through your own wretchedness and misery to the bottom of it all and then you tap the everlasting springs of divine love; it is worth while going through a bit of exercise to get to that. It all comes to simplicity as to the Christ.

Rem "When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life", James 1 : 12 (A.V.).

CAC I think in that verse he contemplates the path of faith. You meet with all kinds of trials but the apostle says it is blessed if you endure trial. He takes up temptation in another aspect which is quite another thing: "But every one is tempted, drawn away, and enticed by his own lust", James 1: 14. We are often drawn away by our own lust and that is not for blessing. The general run of ministry in christendom is to draw people away from what is Christ. It may seem very good, it is all based on Scripture and that is through the wiles of Satan; he would take even what is in Scripture and use it to draw us away from Christ. Our safeguard is to get back to Paul; all recovery is to get back to Paul; for example, in the shipwreck there was no safety except as they came back to Paul. In Acts 27 there was no recovery until they took account of Paul's words. When they listened to Paul there was safety for them. I think what the Lord is doing now is seeking to build us on the foundation of the apostles and prophets and that foundation is Christ.

"Let that which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you", 1 John 2: 24. That is the true safeguard.

2 CORINTHIANS 11 (THIRD READING)

2 Corinthians 11:10-33

CAC The apostle had so ordered his ways that there should not be any occasion to blame the ministry. There were those at Corinth who would have been glad to say he had worked for his own selfish ends. He shows how it was all loss and suffering for him though some said he was to be blamed. We see how very early the enemy was making the assembly, not the world, the scene of his activities; all is under a religious guise, "False apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And it is not wonderful, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness". They were probably using Scripture all the time. There is always some selfish motive behind a wrong action. Paul would not take anything from them as an assembly but he took from individuals amongst them (see 1 Corinthians 16: 17). I do not think it was because they were in a bad state that he could not receive from them but he wished not to be under any obligation to them. He discerned a certain worldly element with them and subsequent events proved how wise he had been. He followed his occupation, and they could not say he was idling about and living on the saints. He was independent; he would not in any way give up his independence though he was very glad to receive from any that were simple, like the Philippians.

It was a great reproach on the Corinthians that they had not discerned the character of those evil workers. It is a great reproach upon us when any who are not ministering the interests of Christ find support from the saints.

This was a positive work of the enemy. We find as a matter of fact that Paul's teaching was soon lost in the church. Their slothfulness and unwatchfulness was the work of the enemy. We very soon let things slip. J.B.S. used to say that the best and highest bit of truth goes first; it is the best bit that the enemy goes for, like any thief. Satan often defeats the mind of God by putting people on a lower level so that the saints live on the line of Old Testament saints. A man thus lives like a man in the flesh and not at all in simplicity as to the Christ. The apostle's heart would have been happy to have been ministering Christ, but it was needful for them that the whole character of suffering should be depicted and all had been worked out in his own experience. In verses 18 to 20 he draws a picture that was really true of them, and it applies to present circumstances. I think if men come in and take clerical places it leads to this. Clericalism relieves people of their responsibility and they like some one to do this for them. In verse 21 the apostle had been

abasing himself; he had a place of dishonour amongst them — it looked almost as if he had been weak, not bold enough to take care of himself. He was with them in weakness and dishonour. He did not come amongst them in religious prominence but worked and took the place of dishonour. It was very fine. Paul was absorbed with things much greater than the things of earth because, great as they were to a man, they were very insignificant compared to these things.

Ques How could the apostle have the care of all the assemblies (verse 28)?

CAC I suppose letters passed in that day as in this; we find abundant evidence of letters passing and messengers coming; he had the burden of all the assemblies on his heart. As a matter of fact, the apostle was safer in prison than anywhere else. In his own history you see the place of the testimony in the world. If you are getting an easy time you may depend upon it you know little about the testimony.

Ques Why did the robbers and others always attack Paul?

CAC I think Satan had a hand in it; Paul was a marked man. If all this happened to a man in these days he would soon begin to suspect he had missed his way. Paul was fully set for the path he was in, and he knew all was against him. Every wrong in the assembly he felt personally; every wrong and weakness was like a blow at his heart; it is really the love of Christ. He brings it in in verse 28; no doubt he felt it far more than what was without and he felt it according to God. We do not carry the burden of it; the apostle carried the burden of it according to God; he entered into it and felt it in relation to divine Persons. It was a real care on his heart. I do not suppose the things without were much to him but it was a real care to him if anything was wrong in the assembly. The apostle was so entirely free from himself that he could better apprehend what was done than if he had had himself before him.

Ques Why does he bring this in in verse 33? Do you think that he thought that in this way he had run away?

CAC He brings it in in connection with his infirmity; he speaks of it in such a remarkable way, "The God and Father of the Lord Jesus knows — he who is blessed for ever — that I do not lie". I think he was going to speak of things now connected with his infirmity and he gives this illustration. In the case of Peter it was needful for the testimony that he should be taken out of prison, but in Paul's case it was necessary for the testimony that he should be left in prison.

The Lord is the supreme One and supreme in every sphere. God allowed Paul to remain in prison for years and the epistles are the result; it was for the

testimony. It was a matter of what was good for the testimony. The Lord is really maintaining the testimony of God and nothing can happen to upset it.

2 CORINTHIANS 12

2 Corinthians 12:1-21

Ques Was it a vision that Paul saw?

CAC I do not know that you could say it was a vision; it was more an experience. He was led to bring all this before the saints that they might see the great contrast between him and those who were seeking to take his place. He was allowed to experience in a remarkable way the heavenly privilege of a man in Christ. This was not for his ministry, it was something for himself; it was not possible for him to utter the things he heard.

Ques Is this the privilege of all?

CAC I do not know if any save Paul have been caught up, but there is nothing to hinder "a man in Christ" being caught up to the third heaven. To be a man in Christ is the privilege of every christian. A man in Christ is perfectly suited to the third heaven and to the things that people are talking about there. We have to learn to abstract ourselves so as to know in some measure what it is to be "a man in Christ". It is the privilege of all christians and if we only realise it for half a minute in our lifetime it is worth something. The apostle was very actively engaged in the Lord's work, labouring night and day; he was not always in this blessed abstraction from the responsible life. If money making, for example, is before us we shall not know anything about it. The apostle did not allow anything in his responsible life that would grieve the Spirit and so he was free to enjoy heavenly privilege. We are not free to enjoy heavenly privilege if we are not walking in the Spirit in the kingdom. Heavenly privilege is outside our responsible life.

Ques What is, "in Christ"?

CAC There are two ways of being in Christ: there is the "in Christ" of divine purpose, which is connected with new creation, and then there is such a thing as being "in Christ", a christian state, that is, the state of a christian in contrast to being in the flesh. Paul speaks of some as being in Christ before him; it is connected with God's new system and covers all that stands in relation to the Head. The apostle could boast without any misgivings as a man in Christ, but of himself as a responsible servant he could not boast, except in his infirmities. It shows the subtlety of the flesh that such a man as Paul should need a terrible weapon like this thorn in the flesh. We should have thought *he* would not need it. I do not know anything that more shows the character of the flesh than that a man like Paul should need such a thorn to prevent its intrusion. It is very solemn.

It is a man in Christ who is caught up, not Paul, the responsible servant. You see from this that it is the intention of God to keep us low in the line of responsibility. We get humblings; there is that which keeps us low in our own experience. We often think that we have a low estimate of ourselves, but we have to have humbling experiences that there may not be any kind of self-confidence. You get, "My grace suffices thee" before the power; it is the grace before the power. God's intention is the good of His people, but Satan is malicious enough in sending his messengers. This was needed to show us what the flesh is. There are three actions of Satan in this epistle: he first blinds (chapter 4, verse 4), then he deceives (chapter 11, verse 3) and then he buffets (chapter 12, verse 7). If a man endures any testing that is allowed of God it is very blessed. A certain test comes upon a man and if he can stand it it is very blessed. The apostle was able to stand the test; he besought three times for it to be taken away and then he got grace and found pleasure in it.

Ques Would you say something as to this experience (verse 4)?

CAC It was personal to the apostle, nothing to pass on to others. It is a blessed thing for a man to be content to have nothing in himself but the experience of weakness. I feel what a blessed state that would be! Paul was made the vessel of Christ's power. It was really the power of the Lord that worked in him. I think he was so reduced that unless the power of Christ was with him he could not go on. But then it was that the power of Christ might tabernacle, have its dwelling-place, on him (see note to verse 9). We have not much experience in these days of a service that is altogether in the power of Christ. It is doubtful if such has been seen in anyone else but in the apostle. The ministry has been brought out really in perfection. It was necessary that it should be so in a vessel like Paul. It would have been a poor thing if it had been brought out imperfectly. It was not a mixed thing. We have to be reduced to be vessels if we are to be for the Lord. We do not contribute anything; we only carry what is put in us. I think the grace makes one so content that you do not have to desire to be free from the thorn. So the soul says, 'I am content'. I think you may feel the sharpness of the thorn but there is a moment when you are content, and you are the subdued vessel of Christ's grace and power. The Lord subdues and then He supports. Of all these things which were so distasteful the apostle says, "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in straits, for Christ". I feel what an immense distance there is between the apostle and me. "For Christ" gives colour to the sufferings.

These are things which make a man weak, and he says, "When I am weak, then I am powerful".

Ques Would you say this was an unanswered prayer?

CAC It was not unanswered prayer but an answer in a better way. I think it was a wonderful answer for him, "My grace suffices thee". I think it was distasteful to the apostle to speak of himself; what he delighted in was the ministry, but what was necessary was to show the kind of man that was needed to set out the ministry. That is the way it works; the ministry is set forth and then you see a man in whom it takes effect. He had to commend himself; it was a kind of reproach on them that he had to speak like this. I have to abstract myself from all that I am as in flesh in order to enter into it. He was so reduced that nothing but the Lord's grace could carry him through.

That gives us the two sides of christianity, which are a great contrast, the side where all is of God and then the side where all our complications come in, the responsible side. The two sides are never lost sight of. It is remarkable he says, "I know", not 'I knew', that is, he still had the consciousness abiding in him of "a man in Christ".

2 CORINTHIANS 13

2 Corinthians 13:1-14

CAC This was the third time the apostle had intended to come to them but he had been hindered by their state. He was now making up his mind to come again but warns them of the consequences. He had certain misgivings that they had not, as we say, bottomed the thing. The apostle knew the Corinthians well and probably had a just estimate of how far the thing had gone. He expresses himself freely and, though thankful that they had taken low ground, he was not sure how far they had gone in self-judgment as to the root of the matter. There is such a thing as revival when there is not restoration. People may be freshened up in their souls when they are not fully restored. The whole company was not guilty in the same way, but they were all compromised; all were committed to it and that is the importance of the fellowship. We have not only to think of ourselves but we compromise the whole assembly of God when we do anything unworthy of God. We need to walk very softly; it would often check us if we thought of this. If all this had been allowed to go on it would have compromised the whole assembly. That is why the apostle is so anxious that there should be a new lump; if anything goes wrong it falsifies the character of the whole testimony. We find the apostle pressing that both as to carnality at Corinth and as to legality in Galatia. He says to both, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump", 1 Corinthians 5: 6 and Galatians 5: 9. The apostle had power to detect things and often we have not. He had insight into things; he could distinguish between power and speech. We are taken in by speech but the apostle was not. He would know the power. We should often feel very small if we came in contact with a man who could measure us up. I do not suppose the apostle would be a very welcome visitor in many a circle. There would be misgivings and we should be ready to say, as the elders did to Samuel, "Comest thou peaceably?" It is a solemn thing to have to do with the Lord. The apostle was invested with the Lord's power and the Lord's discernment, too. It is all blessing unless we are definitely committed to something that is not of the Lord and do not want to give it up. If saints want to be right they do not object to being searched: "Search me, O God", Psalm 139: 23. We are not afraid of the searchings of God.

You get the two sides very strikingly brought before us here. Christ had spoken in grace through the apostle and if now he was speaking after another manner, it was the same Christ. It is very interesting to see that Christ is the evangelist.

Verse 3 shows that whatever the vessel or whatever the instrument may be it is only a vessel after all; it is Christ that enlightens us in what is of God. It is as the Lord speaks that we find ourselves in the light of God, and there is the sense in the soul that Christ has spoken to us, not merely the preacher though it may be that he has said right and blessed things. It is Christ that speaks in him. All this is after the manner of the cross. The cross gives no place to the flesh but reduces it to the weakness of death; that is, the weakness of the cross. The power of God is that which raised Christ. What a grand thing it would be to be on that line! The apostle was really in accord, in keeping, with the cross. That comes out very much in the first epistle; he was careful to preach in such a way that the word of the cross should not be emptied of meaning. If it is preached in the eloquence or wisdom of man it is emptied of meaning. Nothing is less preached than the cross in the religious world generally. The cross is the removal of man and not merely a work done to relieve him. I think the death of Christ is preached as the way of man's benefit so that the culprit can go free; his debt is paid. There is a certain amount of relief in it but that is not the cross. That does not go very far. A truly exercised soul is more concerned about what he is than what he has done. Our first exercise is that I have been bad; the second step is that I want to be good; and the third is that I cannot be good. I seek the help of God to make me good and the more I seek it the more I find I fail. Even God cannot make *me* good; I am irreparably bad. I am not to be mended but ended.

Ques How is it we are so long in arriving at this?

CAC I think we are what the Yorkshire people call 'slack set up'; we are careless and indifferent and not really in earnest; we do not let the light of God work in our consciences. Someone asked J.N.D. once why so few people got out of Romans 7. His answer was very simple, 'Because so few get into it'. A man in Romans 7 would rather die than commit sin; he would be in a perfect agony about it. Now we are not like that, we are very slack. There might be something in a man's nature, a strong natural tendency that would keep him in constant dependence; he could only go on as constantly committing himself to the Lord. We mix up the two sides, the experimental and the practical: one is that I am with God on the ground of Christ and the other is that I need the grace and the power of God all the way through. The first question is, How am I with God? Suppose a drunkard was converted, there is the same tendency in his flesh and there might be that tendency to the end of his days; he is really cast on the Lord as to it and nobody ever cast himself on the Lord and was forsaken. The Lord does not forsake us. It is humiliating to feel what you are, for this may occur even if you have known deliverance.

The weakness of the cross, the absolute weakness of man, is the weakness of death itself. In the cross there is no action of man at all; it is man reduced to his proper place in the sight of God. It is man seen in weakness and abandoned of God; the cross is a most terrible thing. Christ in this world is the crucified One; He is the Man who cannot take any part in the affairs of this world; He is a Man of another order altogether; He is God's power in a resurrection world. The only way of power is the way of the cross. I do not think anything else is God's power. You take a place of absolute nothingness here. The apostle speaks of being weak in Him (verse 4). It is very important how he puts it, that he takes the place of being weak in Him. It is just because he was in this place of absolute weakness that he spoke of God's power. If I could be sure that all that is of the flesh in me was in weakness I should be sure of God's power. That is seen in the way David met Goliath; the one thing that engrossed his soul was that the Philistine had defied the power of the living God and he went in that strength. I think it cost the apostle a good deal to learn all this; he had to be stripped. He was what we should call a man of parts, yet he reins in all his natural powers and was there in the weakness of the cross. He is trembling lest there should be anything of man and the result is that Christ is in these people; it was the voice of Christ that they heard.

Scripture is full of ground for faith but not for unbelief. People look in Scripture for grounds for their unbelief instead of for grounds for their faith (verse 5); it is not to see if they were converted or not but what they were to be concerned about was whether Christ had spoken through Paul. I do not think christianity ever calls upon us to look into our own hearts to see whether we are saved or not. People in that state of soul need to see that they are lost; if they came to that point they would not look in any more. He spoke in relation to Christ and not to establish his own case; he says, as it were, 'If we be as reprobates, I want you to do what is right even if you think me a reprobate'. That is very fine, really beautiful. Their blessing was bound up with the recognition of what Paul was. As a matter of fact, they could not regard him as a reprobate if they were right, but he says, 'I am content to be regarded as such if you are right'. You see such a pure unselfish care for God's people in this beloved servant; it makes one ashamed of oneself. You cannot really touch the truth, it is inviolable; no effort of man can touch it, though they may divert from it. The truth is an abstract thing; it really subsists in Christ. It is like the sun shining; man in all his perverseness may try to shut it out but what can he do? He may keep it out of his heart but he cannot destroy it; he can build walls to shut out the sunshine but he cannot prevent it shining.

In verse 11 'perfected' is rather an interesting word; it is the same as 'mended'; it is the word used in connection with mending nets, the idea of

repair. The apostle was wishing to bring them together so that their rents might be repaired. You see, they had been all torn so he says, 'Be mended'. They were not outwardly divided but they had been very much divided into schools and parties, and the apostle was anxious to bring them all together so that they might be repaired; he is thinking of the testimony of God and he was anxious they should be at peace. If saints are at sixes and sevens there is no testimony for God. The apostle did not like to use severity. When you think of all that had engaged his attention with regard to them it is very lovely that he should now say, "Rejoice".

Ques What would you say as to verse 12?

CAC I think it really means that you are put on friendly terms; you are not to stand off. It is a great thing to cultivate friendly relations with the saints; we are vitally connected with them; it is a great thing to be with each other as saints, being near to each other in interest and care. We ought to cultivate anything that helps this. If there is a little divergence there is often the inclination to stand off. It is not good natural feeling; it is not like people being friendly because they belong to the same club. If a brother walks disorderly you ought to behave towards him that he may be ashamed. I do not think you would salute him with a holy kiss.

MEASURING THE CITY (READING)

2 Corinthians 1: 19 - 22; 2 Corinthians 3: 17, 18; 2 Corinthians 10: 4, 5; Revelation 21: 15 - 17

CAC What is before me in suggesting these scriptures is the thought that we should take account of what exists for God's pleasure at the present moment, and what is shortly going to be displayed in the world to come. It is what is of God as it may be measured by the creature. It seems to me that there is what answers to the breadth, length and height of the city, and it is the pleasure of God that the creature should measure it for it is an angel that measures. I think God would, as it were, put the golden reed into our hands today, and enable us to estimate what is suitable to Him. We may be sure that what is suitable to God will be effectuated just because it is of God. I take it we are together as a company of holy sons, and that it will be our pleasure and great profit to measure the city.

Ques Why is there no depth?

CAC Because what is contemplated is the sphere of divine promise rather than purpose. In Ephesians we get depth because there we are in the sphere of purpose. The city in Revelation 21: 9 - 27 stands in relation to the sphere of promise: it is the complete vindication of God in regard to that scene which has been desolated by the power of evil, the scene by which we are surrounded here. It is an immense stay to the heart to see God vindicated in regard to the whole scene of evil, and God would have us measure that.

Rem We get actual measurements, "twelve thousand stadia"; but you are talking of the moral measurements.

CAC There is a moral suggestion in it. The point is not so much the dimensions but the perfect proportions: the length is equal to the breadth, and both are equal to the height. It is the moral proportions that God calls attention to. The immensity in Ephesians 3: 18 cannot be measured, but in Revelation 21: 15 - 17 there is what can be measured by the creature: it is a blessed and divine perfection in which the glory of God appears, but it is presented as that which the creature can apprehend and measure.

Ques In 2 Corinthians do we get promises, not purposes?

CAC That is why I suggested the scripture in 2 Corinthians 1: 20. I would suggest that we see there something of the "breadth" of the city. We all know what it is to survey the wide desolation brought in by Satan's power and the entrance of sin and death. We might apply Isaiah 8: 8, which speaks of the enemy stretching out his wings on the whole breadth of Immanuel's land.

Immanuel's land, speaking morally, would cover all that is brought in by God being with us. Outwardly the enemy has desolated all that could evidence "God with us". God was with man in innocence; what a blessed thing that was! But the enemy has come in and stretched out his wings over all, and made it desolate. But in the presence of that we can turn to the promises of God as established in Christ; God has met every form of the power of evil, has met it all in Christ. I think that will be displayed in the breadth of the city; it corresponds with, though it divinely surpasses, the breadth of the ruin.

It is most beautiful to see the way God has turned every manifestation of evil into a suggestion of Christ:

that is how He would have us look at every evil in the world and in our flesh today. He would have us turn to the perfect contrast. If you are conscious of any evil, what are you to do? Are you to fret your heart about it, or turn to the perfect contrast in Christ? As evil came in, Satan's power, sin and death, God suggested Christ; "Her seed ... shall crush thy head". When all the confusion of the idolatrous world came in and the nations were scattered, God gave a suggestion of Christ as the centre of blessing for all nations, and that in Him shall all nations be brought into unity. We see the weakness of man, his inability to hold anything for God, and we have known it in ourselves, but God uses it all to bring in a suggestion of Christ, the greatness of Christ. Christ can take up everything and carry it out, and God is vindicated. I think the breadth of the city might be viewed as suggesting this.

Rem When the promises are fulfilled, nothing of evil will be seen in the city, nothing but Christ is seen.

CAC Yes, the blessedness of divine good shines and is brought into display in the scene where evil was.

Ques Do you suggest that the golden reed is given to us now?

CAC Yes, so that we understand the character of the city and what God is doing today in view of its being brought into display. The city is being built today; there is much that obscures its beauty but very soon all such elements will be removed and the city will be seen in all its beauty and perfection.

We are in the presence of evil and its consequences and the natural man frets because of it. What is to rest our hearts? In Psalm 37 one of the commandments is not to fret yourself. If you fret yourself on account of evil, it is only to do evil; that is, it is only adding to the evil. Then what are you to do? "Feed on faithfulness" (verse 3). What a beautiful word! You are privileged to turn from all evil in the world and in yourself and feed on faithfulness, on all

that is established by God in Christ. God has established everything good in Christ. What food to live on!

Then there is length as well as breadth. The length suggests what is wrought in the saints, and it corresponds perfectly with what God has affirmed and confirmed in Christ. If the length were not equal to the breadth God could not have by the saints the glory of His confirmed promises. If the work in the saints were not equal to what is established in Christ it could not be for God's glory by them. I would refer to two scriptures in the Old Testament. In Psalm 40: 5 - 8 we see very plainly Christ coming in and taking up all the immeasurable thoughts of God in view of the blessing of man, and establishing them by and in Himself, but in Psalm 139: 15 - 17 the formation of a vessel is suggested. It takes "many days" to form that vessel, a vessel capable of cherishing all the thoughts of God. That brings in the thought of what is wrought in the saints. "During many days" gives a long period of formation: it covers the whole length of the work of God in forming the members; and the completeness of that work will be displayed in the city. If we measure all that God has wrought "during many days" in the saints, the completeness of which will come out in the city, it will be found to be perfectly equal to what has been effected in Christ for the pleasure of God. Saints will be wrought of God so as to be equal to the apprehension and display of it, so that God may have the glory of it "by us". All that is involved in God establishing us in Christ, anointing us, and sealing us. That involves the whole work of God which results in the saints coming out as an adequate vessel for the display of the thoughts of God, as brought to fruition in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The saints as established in Christ will come out as an adequate vessel for the administration and display of what God has secured in Him. It is an immense thing for us to measure this, to take account of what is going on. I trust every one of us here today is a subject of the work of God. It is not only that we are believers, but we are the subjects of the work of God, born anew, and established in Christ. To be established in Christ means that you have found a resource in Him from all the evil in the world and from yourself. You do not expect anything from the world or yourself; you are established in Christ by the work of God. The work of God in the soul ever moves on the line of Christ being suggested. God never suggests anything to me but Christ, though He has to bring His judgment on what is not Christ. It is blessed to think that there is a work going on in the saints which in its completeness will be proportionate to the whole breadth of what is established in Christ. Such a wonderful work involved the presence of a divine Person. The saints could never be brought up to the measure of what God has secured in Christ except by the presence of a divine Person here, the Spirit.

We are still in mixed conditions, and as long as we are so, there is a good deal that obscures what God is doing. Notwithstanding that, with the golden reed in our hands, we can recognise what is being wrought of God. I believe all that is connected with the saints being wrought of God answers to the length of the city.

Ques Would the golden reed imply the power of discernment? It was the angel who had it.

CAC The angels are holy sons, and being holy sons they have ability for divine discernment and interest. If the angels are deeply interested we ought to be more so, for we are holy sons too, kindred in that sense to the angels. The golden reed suggests ability to discern what is suitable to God. In principle Abraham had the golden reed, and nothing here answered to it, so he waited for a city which had foundations. The God of glory appeared to him; that gave Abraham a golden reed by which to measure things — everything must be suitable to the God of glory. If man had a city, the God of glory must have a city and Abraham waited for that city.

Rem If we knew better how to use the golden reed we should not want the things of this world.

CAC There is nothing in this world worth measuring. I would not cross the street to see the finest exhibition that ever was. Dr. Hawker said, when asked if he had seen the Exhibition of 1851, 'I have seen the King in His beauty and beheld the land that is very far off'. That man had the golden reed in his hand. The finest display that man can put before you is the glory of the usurper who would banish God from His creation if possible; we do not want that glory. I remember at seven years old going to see an exhibition, and written over a large hall was "Glory to God in the highest". I thought to myself, What a contradiction; this place is full of the glory of man.

The idea of formation "during many days" suggests length. Wonderful things are going on in that length! We have all had a length, some long and some short, as subjects of the work of God, and in the experience of the ways of God. All our personal experiences, our exercises in connection with domestic and business matters, the discipline of the Father, our environment as set with our brethren in the assembly and all the precious ministry of Christ by which we are fed so as to grow belong to the length. All this qualifies us to know and give expression to all that which has become Yea and Amen in Christ. One delights to think of it. I connect length with the prolonged operations of God in His saints, the completeness of which will be seen in the city.

Ques What do you connect with height?

CAC I would suggest that the height speaks of the saints' apprehension of what God is in His nature, what lies behind all the promises as confirmed in Christ, and all the operations of God in the saints. The whole scope of promise in Christ and the operations of God in the saints that He may have the glory of what He has secured in Christ by them are measured by the love of God; so the breadth, length and height are equal.

Ques How do you measure it?

CAC It is the love of God as conditioned by the sphere of His operations, the love of God in new covenant character. It is love that has taken account of what man is in all his distance, has taken account of conditions here, and met all, by what is Yea and Amen in Christ and by the powerful operations of the Spirit down here. It is not love on the purpose side.

Ques Would you look at this in the light of the latter part of Romans 8?

CAC In Romans 8 the saint is in the presence of all the exercises that are brought upon him by the scene of moral confusion where the creature is subject to vanity. The saint groans, but in presence of all he is fully persuaded that nothing can separate him from the love of God in Christ — he has measured the height. We have measured the breadth in Romans 5, and measured the length in chapter 8 in connection with the Spirit. Now you measure the height at the end of chapter 8: nothing can separate us from the love of God.

I think the height answers to 2 Corinthians 3; we see the glory of the Lord there. He is so great He can bring in the love of God in all its perfection and apply it to everything found in this world. He can bring it in in regard to sin, confusion, death and everything else; that is the height. Evil is displaced by the love of God and God is known in His nature. What a triumph! We come very slowly to a true thought of the love of God. There must be the light of God in the soul; there must be faith; that is the result of the work of God in the soul. But God would have us know what man is to Him, how He values man in His love: "God so loved the world". It was His eternal thought to dwell with man. There is a beautiful word in Deuteronomy 33: "He loveth the peoples, All his saints are in thy hand, And they sit down at thy feet; Each receiveth of thy words". The outcome of the love of God, of its activity, is that we realise we are in the hand of Christ today, and we sit down at His feet and hear His words. The word, "He loveth the peoples" suggests that they lie in His bosom. What a wonderful thought! To lie in the bosom of God! Do we believe that is our place? We think of Christ as in the bosom of the Father, but men, God's people, lie in His bosom; and because of that He puts them in the hand of Christ and under the blessed influence and instruction of Christ.

Ques The apostle says, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God", 2 Thessalonians 3: 5. Is it by the Lord that we get a right apprehension of love?

CAC In Romans 5 the Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts. But the Lord directing our hearts into the love of God is an administrative action which we prove when we are together as we are today. The Spirit shedding the love of God is secret; it is what goes on in the heart. But the Lord is directing our hearts into the love of God as together this afternoon.

Ques Would you say a word as to the anointing?

CAC My impression is that the anointing is what capacitates us to apprehend the breadth of what God has secured in Christ. We are firmly attached to Christ in the power of the anointing. If I am moving along with the anointing I shall never be diverted from Christ. The anointing which abides with us is true and is not a lie. Think of God talking to us like that, telling us that the anointing which we have is true and nothing is false about it: it ever teaches us to abide in Christ.

Ques Is the anointing the power by which we know what is set forth in Christ?

CAC The anointing involves the saints being brought up to the measure of the Christ.

Ques Where do the gates and walls come in?

CAC We get the thought of separation in the wall. The administration is connected with the breadth and length; the gates are in the breadth and length. But it seems to me that the height indicates the saints' apprehension of the love of God, the blessed source of all. When we come to administration, it is what goes out to the world; it is the administration of all that is set forth in the promises of God as secured and confirmed in Christ. All this will be set forth in the world to come. The world to come will come under that influence, and what lies behind is the love of God. All this is given to us as present light that we may be formed by it. There is nothing that produces confidence like love.

Ques Does the measuring of the gates give a suggestion of how to act now in the way of administration?

CAC Yes, I thought so. The measuring of the gates indicates an exercise as to how administration is to be carried on now. The administration of the gates of the city has nothing to do with discipline within; it has to do with the testimony of grace going out to the world. It is a universal testimony going out from the twelve gates. Measuring the gates is an evangelical measurement.

Ques What is the meaning of the city lying foursquare?

CAC If the operations of God in the saints and the result of His ways and working with them did not correspond perfectly with what He has established in Christ, the city would not be four-square, it would not have its proper proportions.

Ques. What is the wall?

CAC The measurement of the wall brings in another thought, that of creature perfection. The breadth, length and height are all divine, the divine mind established in Christ, the divine mind established by God's work in the saints, and His own blessed love the measure of both. But the wall is creature perfection, the measure of a man, that is, the angel. I suggested the verse in 2 Corinthians 10 as answering to the measurement of the wall: what is seen there is creature perfection. The measure of a man is the same as the measure of an angel. The measure for every intelligent creature is obedience. God is working in the saints today so that every thought should be brought into captivity to the obedience of the Christ; there you have the one hundred and forty-four cubits of the walls. Fancy the saints being brought to that! Not a single element of lawlessness remains to be in disparity with the work of God.

Ques Do we get a suggestion of that in the manna as angels' food?

CAC Yes, man ate angels' food; the idea is that man should lead a life morally like the angels. They are to do God's will as it is done in heaven: the holy angels are perfectly obedient, and now we feed on angels' food in order that we may lead the same life morally.

Rem The walls are not such a large measure as the measurement of the city: they are only one hundred and forty-four cubits.

Rem The measurement of the wall is not divine measurement but perfect according to human measurement.

CAC Yes, it is creature measurement, "man's measure, that is, the angel's". The measure for all intelligent creatures is obedience, and the city includes that element. There is not only the glory of God set forth there, but all that is perfect and suitable to God in the creature. The principle of obedience excludes all lawlessness, and therefore establishes the principle of holy separation. For the obedience of the Christ to control every thought is very wonderful. God is working to bring that about by the subduing of His grace. He brings us to appreciate obedience, to appreciate having such a Head as the Christ.

Every high thing is to be pulled down — there is a tremendous warfare going on in the souls of the saints. Every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God and every reasoning are to come down; and every thought is to be brought into captivity to the obedience of the Christ. There is no room for an atom of lawlessness there.

The effect of measuring these things spiritually would be an intense degree of separation from the world, an intense degree of devotion to God who has taken us into His bosom; and then we should be prepared for the moment of display. The preparation is going on now, the display in all its fulness will be in the future.

A vessel to dishonour is one who has no sense of what is suitable to God. There are people breaking bread who have no sense of what is suitable to God. There were people in Corinth who had no golden reed: "Some are ignorant of God: I speak to you as a matter of shame", 1 Corinthians 15: 34. There was every kind of disorder going on. The possession of the golden reed would have had a great effect on them.

Ques How would you get the reed?

CAC In the first place we get it by the glad tidings which brings the knowledge of God to us. Then we have it not only objectively but subjectively as having the Spirit. Every one having the Spirit has the golden reed morally. How far he uses it is another thing. Taking these measurements would qualify us to go on together as those who are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God. We should have a divine standard before us, as established in Christ and knowing the love of God. These great realities are abiding; the measurements of the city will not change.

Ques Would going on together be the street?

CAC Yes, people talk about the golden streets, but there is nothing about streets, there is one street; the saints all move the same way, their movements are all in the divine nature.

Ques Why are the measurements of the wall and city different?

CAC The disparity shows the difference between divine and creature perfection. Both come together in Christ, there was divine perfection there, 'a life divine below', but there was creature perfection also. There was never such obedience as that seen in Christ. Obedience is creature perfection. The obedience of the Christ will give character by and by to the whole moral universe. The two must go together. There could not be the outshining of God with lawlessness on the side of the creature. When He shines out the

lawlessness of the creature must go. The obedience of the Christ excludes every element of lawlessness.

"IN HIM IS THE YEA, AND IN HIM THE AMEN" (ADDRESS)

2 Corinthians 1:19-22

There are not many passages of Scripture which set forth a greater fulness of blessing than the one before us. When the apostle wrote the first epistle to the Corinthians he was straitened; he could not let out his heart to them. Their low and carnal state rendered them unable to enter into the deep things of God. But the first epistle had its effect in producing self-judgment; they went down under it in true repentance. When Paul heard this it seemed to start all the springs of his heart, and he was able to write this second epistle, and to pour out on them all the wealth of God.

In 1 Corinthians two things are prominent, the cross and the Spirit. The cross shuts out what is of man, and the Spirit brings in what is of God. When we know the word of the cross as God's power we judge ourselves, and when there is self-judgment on our part there is no hindrance to our entering into the deep and blessed things of God. We are then in a state to learn all that we are brought into by the grace and love of God. God's pleasure and our blessing are established in Jesus Christ the Son of God, the One whom Paul had preached at Corinth. "The Son of God, Jesus Christ, he who has been preached by us among you ... did not become yea and nay, but yea is in him". God would have us to know that blessed Person in whom is the "yea".

In connection with this I wish to speak about three men who may be seen in Scripture. First, a man in whom there is nothing but "nay". Then a man in whom there is both "yea" and "nay". And, third, a Man in whom there is nothing but "yea".

The man in whom there is nothing but "nay" is the natural, unconverted man. Whatever God says to that man, the only answer is "nay". There is in him the constant negation of God's will and pleasure. Let us look at a few scriptures which shew how there is nothing but "nay" to God in the natural man.

Genesis 6: 5, 6. Here we see man before the flood, with the light of nature and conscience, and the presence of death as the powerful witness of man's fall and of God's righteous judgment upon sin. There were also in that day the prophesying of Enoch and the preaching of Noah as further testimony. But was there any response to the light and testimony given? No. Every thought of man was evil and that continually; there was nothing in him but "nay" to God.

Psalms 53: 2, 3. This refers to a time subsequent to the giving of the law from Mount Sinai. Much more of the will of God had been made known to men, but

the only answer of man is "nay".

Isaiah 5: 7. This shows what man was in the time of the prophets. God had separated the children of Israel from the nations, and had cultivated and cared for them, but now when He looked for fruit pleasing to Himself, the only answer He got was "nay".

Mark 7: 20 - 23. Now we have come to the time of Christ. Is man any better? Is he beginning to learn to say "yea" to God? Not a bit. The terrible things spoken of here as proceeding from the heart of man are altogether contrary to God. It is all "nay".

Acts 7: 51 - 53. This is the time of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and man still continues his terrible history of contrariety to God. It is the same thing all through. Whether before the flood, or under the law, or the prophets, or in presence of Christ or the Holy Spirit there is in the natural man nothing but 'nay'. He violates nature and conscience, breaks the law, despises the prophets, betrays and murders Christ, resists the Holy Spirit, and stones to death the man who witnesses of an exalted and glorified Christ. What a history!

One more scripture, and then I will turn from this man in whom is nothing but "nay". In Romans 7: 18 we see a man who had learned in his own experience that in him was "nay". He could say, I have conscious knowledge "that in me ... good does not dwell". I put it to myself and to every one here, 'Have we that conscious knowledge?' You may say, 'How does a man get it?' Well, certainly not by the light of reason, or by the light of conscience, or even by the light of Scripture, for Saul of Tarsus had all these in great measure before he discovered that in him was "nay" and nothing but "nay". It was the mighty work of God in his soul effecting the new birth which resulted in his making this discovery. He became conscious of a new inward man according to which he could take account of all that was in him according to the flesh and know that there was no good in him. When a man is born anew it is as though a divine candle were lighted in his heart which exposes everything there in an entirely new light. Saul of Tarsus had thought, no doubt, that there was nothing bad in him before, but now he discovered that there was nothing good. He looked into himself and found nothing but "nay" to God.

Have you found out that there is nothing in you according to the flesh but a continual "nay" to God? This is true of you as a child of Adam. If you have the conscious knowledge of it, it will help you to see clearly that all blessing must be in Christ. You cannot connect the blessing of God with sinful flesh. The reason people do not enter into the blessings of christianity is that they will hang on to that wretched man in whom there is nothing for the pleasure of

God. They do not reach the moral end of self in their own minds. Someone has said that if you transpose 'flesh' and drop a letter, you find it is self. There is nothing in self but "nay" to God.

Now we will look at a man in whom may be seen both "yea" and "nay". This is the converted man — the one who has been born anew and is the subject of a work of God. Practically, you will find that all through Scripture, and in actual experience there is in the converted man both "nay" and "yea". I will shew you a few examples in Scripture.

We will look first at Moses — one of the greatest men in Scripture.

In Numbers 12: 3 we see what was "yea", what was pleasing to God as the fruit of His own work and grace. I do not think meekness was natural to Moses at all. My impression is that he was a very different kind of man naturally. He was not very meek with the Egyptian some forty or fifty years before! His meekness was the fruit of God's work in him; it was a little bit of Christ coming out in him, and it was well pleasing to God; it was a bit of the "yea" — an anticipation of Christ under the eye of God.

Let us turn now to Numbers 20: 7 - 11. Ah! there we see a bit of the "nay". At that moment he did not enter into the mind of God. He did not understand that God was appearing in the glory of grace to supply the need of His poor, discontented people. He did not rise to the thought that God was going on with His people in grace, of which the priesthood was the abiding witness amongst them. He did not sanctify God in his language or his action. God sanctified Himself, it is true, and proved what He was in spite of it all, but there was "nay" to God in Moses and not "yea". Holy meekness came out in him in chapter 12, but now he says, "Ye rebels ...". This outbreak of the "nay" cost Moses a good deal. He was not allowed to enter the promised land.

Now let us read two scriptures with reference to David, 1 Samuel 13: 14 and 2 Samuel 11: 27. There was much in David that was "yea". The grace and work of God were seen very distinctly in him. Indeed there is no man in Scripture whom the Spirit of God has used so much to give expression prophetically to the language of the Spirit of Christ, and of Christ personally. But there was also the "nay".

Now let us turn to Matthew 16:16,17; Matthew 16:21-23, and see the "yea" and the "nay" in a New Testament saint. How close the "yea" and "nay" come together! When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God", it was "yea"; it answered perfectly to what was in the heart of God. But in how short a time did Peter, who had thus been the mouthpiece of a revelation from the Father, become the mouthpiece of Satan! His natural sentiments, even

when they ran in so good a direction, as men would say, were really "nay" to the mind of God.

Beloved friends, if we are born of God and have the Spirit there is that in us which is "yea", that which is of God and according to His mind, but in our practical history I am sure we have all proved that there is also with us that which is "nay". Good does not dwell in our flesh; nothing improves it, not even the presence of the Spirit; the moment we cease to walk in the Spirit we drop down to that which is always "nay".

What a solemn contrast there is between the beginning and the end of 2 Corinthians 12. A man in Christ goes up into paradise at the beginning of the chapter: that is all "yea". But at the end the apostle expresses his fears lest there should be very much coming out in the saints at Corinth which was "nay". How such a contrast ought to exercise our hearts and consciences! It is only that which is wrought in us by God which answers "yea" to Him.

Now I come to speak of the blessed Man in whom there is nothing but "yea". What a divine relief and joy it is to turn to that Man! "For the Son of God ... did not become yea and nay, but yea is in him". Thank God, there is a blessed Man in whom is the perfect answer to all His good pleasure, the eternal delight of His heart. God has brought perfection into this world, and set it up now at His own right hand in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ. People talk about not believing in perfection, but, beloved friends, you will never have rest and satisfaction of heart until you find perfection. God has provided for the satisfaction of every true craving of man's heart and conscience by bringing in perfection. I do not mean perfection in us but perfection in Christ. The moment we come to Christ we reach perfection in Him. All is "yea" in Him. It is in coming to Him that we receive rest. He says "Come to me, ... and I will give you rest". If you have not got rest it is because you have not really come to that blessed One in whom is the "yea". I do not mean that you are not a believer in Jesus, but you have not come to Him in this blessed character as the resting place of God's pleasure, and as the One in whom all God's thoughts of love and grace are established, and also as the One in whom there is the perfect setting forth of all that God is. It is God's great thought to make that blessed Person known to us, to firmly attach us to Him.

Now let us look at some scriptures which speak of this One in whom is "yea".

Luke 2: 49. Here we see Him as a holy Child of twelve, having come into this world of which it had been said that "there is not one that seeks after God", and He is the perfect contrast to it all. His Father's business was His one concern. There was absolute devotedness to God in that holy Child. How wonderful it is to think of Him coming into this world at the lowest point as a

Babe, and growing up here in divine perfection under the eye of God, God's tender Plant in this scene of thorns and briars!

Luke 3: 22. He had then reached the age of thirty and was about to go forth in public service and ministry. God's voice greeted Him from the opened heaven as the beloved Son in whom was God's delight. In Him was "yea"; there was the perfect answer to all God's pleasure in Him.

John 8: 29. Here we see again One in whom all was "yea" for the Father; He was the perfect and divine Servant of the Father's pleasure here.

John 12: 27, 28. Note these verses well. Why was His holy soul troubled? It was because He, in whom was the perfect "yea" to all the will of God, was about to put Himself in contact with sins, and curse, and death, and judgment, with the condemnation of the man in whom was nothing but "nay". He was going into the place of sin for the glory of God, and the bearing of sin, the removal of the man in whom was "nay", was a terrible thing. It cost Him the anguish, the darkness, the forsaking on the cross. But in view of all this, and knowing well what it involved, He gave a perfect answer to the blessed God, "Father, glorify thy name". That was His answer to God in view of His sufferings and death. In Him was "yea" even in the place of sin's holy judgment, and of our curse and condemnation. It had been written of Him from the past eternity, "Lo, I come ... to do, O God, thy will", and that will was that all our guilt and pollution should be put away in righteousness so that we might be blessed in the knowledge of God. And in the place where all this came upon Him He gave a perfect answer to the holiness of God, justifying the Holy One who there forsook Him: "Yea is in him".

But where is He now? He must needs suffer and rise again from the dead that the Scriptures might be fulfilled; He has been raised by the glory of the Father and He now sits at the right hand of God as the Beloved. He is there — the eternal Object of the Father's delight and love. In Him is the "yea". One ray of His glory is enough to take the shine out of this world for the heart that perceives it, and to throw self into the shade. When you see Him you are glad to say, 'He is, and I am not'; you are glad to disappear in the presence of the One in whom is the "yea".

Then the apostle goes on to a further thought in verse 20. How vast is the scope of this one verse! One might preach on it for a hundred years without exhausting it. Some one has said that there are thirty thousand promises in Scripture. It may be so; I have never counted them; but whatever the number is, "in him is the yea, and in him the amen". They are all affirmed and confirmed in Christ. How great, how glorious is Christ!

So far as I see there are three great classes of promises in Scripture. I will give you an example of each, and you may find it interesting to follow it out more in detail for yourself.

Genesis 3: 15. You may say that this was not exactly a promise, as it was addressed to the serpent, but it had certainly the nature of a promise. It was a statement of what God would do for His own glory and for the blessing of man. In this chapter we see the introduction of sin and death and Satan's power. These three things go together. No sooner were they introduced than God appeared on the scene with this blessed declaration of His own purpose. It is so all through Scripture. As different manifestations of the power of evil and its fruits appeared God met them with promises. In the case before us, the serpent had no sooner shown his head than God said, 'I will have a Man to bruise that head'. And as the history of evil and of man's weakness developed, God met it all by promises. He pledged Himself in that way to remove the evil and to put a corresponding good in its place. So every manifestation of what was evil became the occasion for a promise in which God engaged Himself to remove that evil, and to put in its place what was good and holy and blessed. And whatever promises of God there are, in Christ is the yea and in Him the amen.

It is a terribly solemn fact that sin and death and Satan's power have come into the world. Men struggle in vain to get rid of these things. All civilised nations are doing their best to improve the condition of things here. They succeed, perhaps, in whitewashing the exterior a little, but under the surface there are "dead men's bones and all uncleanness". Then men try to grapple with death. There is no science people are so deeply interested in as medical science. With what delight is every new discovery hailed! Men are glad to think that death can be pushed back a year or two. But how impotent is man in all this! Sin is here and men cannot remove it; death is here and men cannot set it aside; Satan's power is here and men are glad to have it so. An overwhelming majority are in favour of Satan's rule, and prefer it to God's. Satan says to man, 'You can go your own way', but if God were to rule He would necessarily say, 'You must go My way'. Man says, 'I prefer to go my own way, and not God's way'. He thus chooses to be ruled by Satan.

Now think of God bringing in Christ to meet the question of sin, and to annul death and Satan's power! Now there is a spot where neither sin nor death nor Satan's power can ever come. Where is that spot? It is the blessed Person of the Christ. He has put away sin, annulled death, and bruised the serpent's head. Where do we see this victory? In the course of things in this world? No; we see it in Christ at the right hand of God. In contrast to sin and death and

Satan's power, He has brought in righteousness and life and the kingdom of God. He is the antitype of the coats of skin and of the tree of life. All the promises of God in Him are yea and in Him amen.

Now turn to Genesis 12: 2. I turn to this as an example of another class of promises, which come in in relation to all the confusion which sin has introduced here. Sin and death and Satan's power having come in, there is confusion here instead of blessing. Everything is out of order. "Let us make ourselves a name" (Genesis 11: 4) is man's supreme ideal of happiness. A man would not mind working all the flesh off his bones and dying in a gutter if he could thereby make himself a name. But all this results in confusion because it excludes God, and there is no true happiness in it. "Blessing" is happiness conferred by God. God's answer to Babel was the calling out and blessing of Abraham. "I will ... bless thee, and make thy name great". God called him out of the confusion of the world to have true happiness, and to be made great in a divine way. The world has but a poor idea of happiness and greatness; it is all confusion if looked at morally. But God delights to make men happy and great by giving them the knowledge of Christ. God made Abraham's name great by bringing Christ into his family. All the blessing of God has come in in Christ. I put it to every one here, Are you in the joy of divine blessing — of happiness conferred by God? We are either looking for happiness from Babel or in Christ. God has brought in the greatest happiness for man in Christ. The world system looks very attractive to the young; they go into things with enthusiasm and do not see the emptiness of it all. But it is all tinsel and unreality. There is a good deal of gaiety in this city, but do you suppose there is real happiness in the hearts of these devotees of fashion with all their pleasures? They get a certain amount of gratification for their natural tastes, but morally it is all confusion. If you want happiness it is to be found in Christ and there alone, but you cannot have it without separation. God said to Abraham, "Go out ...". To reach blessing you must leave the place where there is nothing but confusion. In the gospel Christ is presented to us that we may be attracted to Him and thus morally separated from this world of confusion. God gives what is infinitely better, what is worthy of Himself, "things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard", 1 Corinthians 2: 9. All the promises of God are brought to pass in Christ, and established in such a way that they can never be overthrown.

Then a third class of promises comes in in connection with the utter weakness of man. As an example of this we may turn to 2 Samuel 23: 1 - 5. These were the last words of David. God's gentleness had made David very great; many divine promises were connected with him, but now he had come to his last words; he was not suffered to continue by reason of death. Death is the utter

weakness of man. The promises could not be established in a man who was going down into death. David was not strong enough to hold the promises. Whatever God might give to man after the flesh he could not hold it because of his weakness. David recognised the necessity for another Person to come in who should be "as the light of the morning, like the rising of the sun, a morning without clouds". There was One who could pass through the night of man's death and condemnation, and rise to be the Sun of an eternal day, One able to hold everything for the glory of God and the blessing of man in the power of resurrection. David had to turn from himself and his own house to Christ. He was dying, and his house was "not so before God", but he could turn to a greater Person in whom everything should be established in the light and power of resurrection. "An everlasting covenant, ordered in every way and sure" is established in a risen Christ. David could not hold the promises by reason of death, but, by the Spirit, he was in view of One who could establish them and hold them for ever. Whatever promises of God there are, in Christ is the yea, and in Him the amen. Then mark those words, "For glory to God by us". God gets the glory and praise of all that He has established in Christ "by us". He does not get it from angels but from men. It is by the assembly that principalities and authorities in the heavenlies learn the all-various wisdom of God. God will have glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus throughout all ages. The assembly has divine intelligence of all that God has established and confirmed in Christ, and thus becomes competent to give Him the glory and praise of it. The praise and glory of God will be found in the fullest way in the assembly for ever.

God's perfect delight is in Christ; in Him is the "yea" of all God's pleasure. And all the promises of God, the establishment of God's thoughts of love and grace towards man, in Him are yea and in Him amen. May God make us better acquainted with Him, so that in fuller measure there may be "glory to God by us".

FIRMLY ATTACHED TO CHRIST (ADDRESS)

2 Corinthians 1:19-22

There is a fulness in these verses which it is impossible to exhaust. Everything is "Yea" in Christ; in coming to Him we come to perfection. When the Holy Spirit says, "Let us go on to perfection", He means Christ as the risen and heavenly One. The Hebrew believers were to leave the rudiments as found in judaism and go on to the fulness of everything in Christ. An old divine said that in the Old Testament God was teaching His people their letters; in the New Testament He is teaching them that those letters always spell Christ, and in the world to come He will make manifest what Christ is. The Hebrews were in danger of stopping at the letters and not learning what they spelt. In coming to Christ we have come to perfection and in Him all the promises of God are yea and amen; they are affirmed and confirmed in Him. The pleasure of God and the blessing of man are established in the fullest way in Christ.

I want to bring before you tonight the statement at the end of verse 20, "For glory to God by us". God has established wonderful things in Christ, but how is He going to get the glory of it? "By us". The saints are taken up as vessels of mercy prepared for glory. A diamond is a good illustration of a saint, for in itself it is only a bit of carbon. Its value lies in the wonderful power it has to refract and reflect light. Without light a diamond would be a worthless thing. Without divine light how worthless should we be! But through infinite grace we have been made capable of receiving divine light in such a way that God gets glory by us. If a ray of sunlight passes through a dark room from a hole in the shutter, every speck of dust that floats in the sunbeam shines like a star. God shines upon us in the glory of all that He has established in Christ that He may illuminate us and thus get glory by us. Is it not a wonderful thing to be illuminated by the grace and purpose of God established in Christ?

But this necessitates a work of God in us. If God is to have the glory of all that He has established in Christ by us, we must be brought into it and formed by it. Hence we have in verse 21, "he that establishes us with you in Christ", or, as it reads literally, 'firmly attaches us with you to Christ'. God's great object is to firmly attach us to Christ. The moon is firmly attached to the earth, and the earth to the sun. The spiritual law of gravitation is attachment to Christ. I should like to show how this comes into action.

Let us look first at a man who was unattached. A negative sometimes helps to show by contrast the true character of the positive; read Job 29: 11 - 16.

There are about fifty 'I's' and 'me's' and 'my's' in that chapter. It is the language of an unattached and self-centred man, though not an unconverted

man but a true saint of God. Job was taking the fruits of divine goodness and grace and clothing himself with them, so that all was tending to make self big and important. It is possible to use even the blessings of christianity in this way, to make man more important and satisfied than ever. This is really the spirit of the Pharisee.

But look at Job in chapter 42, verses 5 and 6. When he sees God in all His greatness, purity and holiness, he says, "I abhor myself and repent". That is what I call detachment. There cannot be attachment to Christ without detachment from self and from the world to which self belongs. Job found out that the beautiful self about which he had so much to say in chapter 29 would not do for God, and when he saw God he found that it would not do for him either. Many believers are on the line of self-improvement rather than on the line of God's work in them. They would like to be more intelligent, more devoted or more useful, but their desires really centre round self. But God has no intention of making you great in this way; what He wants is to build up the knowledge of Christ in your heart, and that will give you a great sense of your own nothingness. On our side there is imperfection in everything, and yet how soon vanity and self-satisfaction come in if we do anything, as we may think, pretty well! At the end of forty-one chapters job comes to "dust and ashes". Then we get forty-one Psalms which give the history of another Man, and the first book of Psalms ends with, "But as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever". That is Christ. The man made of dust goes back to dust; he is vanity. But Christ came down from heaven and glorified God, and is now upheld in His integrity and set before God's face for ever. It is a blessed thing to be detached from the man who comes to dust and ashes and attached to the Man who is set before God's face for ever.

In Psalm 42 we find the language of one who has done with self and is looking for satisfaction in God. All his desires are going out to God. Someone has said that desires are the wings of the soul. There is hardly attachment here but there is detachment and desire. But in Psalm 45 there is attachment. It is a poor thing to say, "I abhor myself" unless you come to see a Person better than yourself. For that you must look at Christ. He is "fairer than the sons of men". Every moral beauty resides in Him. All through Scripture everything that is pure and lovely and of good report is of Christ. If you think of Noah as a righteous man, or of Enoch as walking with God and pleasing Him, it is a ray of Christ coming out in those saints, and so it is all through Scripture. Have you come to view the moral beauty of the One fairer than the sons of men? Do you love Him and follow Him? Do you own His claim over you? That is

attachment. A new law of moral gravitation has begun to act upon you. You are held by Christ.

Then "grace is poured into thy lips", Psalm 45: 2. The One in whom every moral perfection is found is the bringer in of the all-blessing grace of God. He comes, not to demand that we should be like Him, but to bring us infinite blessing from God; His feet were beautiful as He brought good tidings and published peace. How could we bear to look at all His perfections if He did not bring supreme grace to us? God presents His grace to us in that blessed One. People often think of the grace of God as if it were something in themselves, and when they find that in themselves which is quite contrary to grace they get into doubts and fears. But Christ is the blessed Vessel of grace. The grace that secures my blessing is not the grace that is in me but the grace that is in Him. How many fluctuations there are in us but there is an abiding fulness of grace and truth in Christ. We have been drawn to Christ to find fulness of grace in Him.

"Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever"; Christ is the accepted and exalted Man at the right hand of God, and now He has companions. He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His companions. In Psalm 42 we have the enquiry, "When shall I come and appear before God?" The answer is that we appear before God as the companions of Christ, the blessed Man who is set before God's face for ever. God firmly attaches us to Him. It is not that I am made anything in myself but I am attached to the Man in whom everything is established for God. Beloved friends, do we know anything about this? Do the meditations and joys of our secret hours alone with God bear witness to our delight in Christ? It is possible to seem bright in the meetings and to be active in service without really being filled with joy in Christ when we are alone. You may have to deplore your own failure and weakness, but where do you find the rest and joy of your heart?

"He must increase, but I must decrease", said John the baptist. He was coming into attachment to that blessed Person who was from heaven and who was above all. He rejoiced that the Bridegroom should have the bride, though it made nothing of himself; his own followers left him to follow Christ and he rejoiced in it.

In Galatians 2: 19, 20 we see a man firmly attached to Christ. If you get alongside job in self-abhorrence, and then see all the perfection of the blessed Man who is set before God's face for ever, you may well ask, 'Where can there be a meeting place between what He is and what I am?' You will find that meeting place at the cross. That holy One came into the dust of death; He came into that which was our due on account of sin. If we go down into dust

in the sense that death is upon us, how blessed it is to see Him go down into the dust of death to deliver us and to bring the love of God to us! Then "ashes" speak of exhausted judgment. Christ came into death and has exhausted the fire of judgment, and now as risen and at the right hand of God He is the righteousness and life of those who believe on His name. We were ended sacrificially in His death. Paul was in the light and power of this and could say, "I am crucified with Christ", but, more than this, he could speak of Christ living in him. If you could have got into the apostle's heart you would have found that self had no place there but that Christ lived in his affections. It is as Christ is in our affections that we live to God. Living to God is not our conduct in this world, but our delight in Christ as He lives in our affections. If Christ really lives in my affections I live to God, not otherwise. Many are trying to live for God before they have learned how to live to God. It is by being firmly attached to Christ that we live to God and for His pleasure. God has established all His pleasure in Christ and He would now so attach us to Christ that we might be practically detached from self and the world.

"And has anointed us": I think the idea of anointing is that one is made capable of occupying the position in which he is set by God. Of old the king and the priest were anointed; in figure they were given divine competency for the positions they occupied. The Lord Jesus was anointed for His blessed ministry of grace with the Holy Spirit and with power (see Luke 4: 18 and Acts 10: 38). We are anointed that we may abide in Christ (1 John 2: 27). God would firmly attach us to Christ and then we are anointed that we may stand fast in Christ. We do not abide in Christ by will or effort but in the power of that anointing which we have received. It is a great thing to abide in Christ. There are many seducers seeking to draw us away from Christ, but in the power of the anointing we can withstand them (Colossians 2: 8 - 10). If we are filled full in Christ what do we want with anything else?

"Who also has sealed us": there is moral order in the way these things are put. God first firmly attaches us to Christ and then we are anointed that we may abide in Him; then we get the sealing; we come out here as carrying God's mark in this world. It is said of the Son of Man, "For him has the Father sealed, even God", John 6: 27. There was a blessed Man in this world who carried the Father's mark in every act and word. The Father's seal was upon everything He said or did; there was the fullest evidence that the Father had sent Him and that all that He said and did was of the Father.

It is a wonderful thing for us to go through this world carrying God's mark. The mark is that the presence of the Spirit becomes characteristic of the christian. If we allow anything inconsistent with the Holy Spirit to that extent

we deface the seal. We are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise that He may bring out in us His own holy fruits, and thus give us the character of Christ. It is as Christ is formed in us and comes out of us that we really appear in this world as carrying God's mark. It is a wonderful thing that we should carry God's mark before the day of redemption. All that is of God will be in glorious display then, but we are sealed that we may carry God's mark morally till the day of redemption. To do so necessitates that we should disallow everything that grieves the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 4: 22 - 30). We have not the Spirit as a mere deposit but to give character to our whole state and to form us after God. How serious it is, then, if we allow that which grieves Him and hinders His blessed work in us!

Then finally, God has "given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts". That looks on to the future. We have a bit of our eternal portion. That portion is to be with Christ and like Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5: 1 - 5). God has wrought us for glory with Christ above and we have the earnest and foretaste of it by the Spirit. We have obtained an inheritance in Christ. God has brought about a universe of bliss which finds its moral centre and Head in Christ. God will put us in possession of that inheritance very shortly but in the meantime we have the Spirit as the earnest of it; so we may have now as heavenly light what soon shall be our part. May God help us to receive heavenly light. We ought not to be unintelligent in the ways and purposes of God; neither should we be if we did not so much grieve and hinder His Holy Spirit.

CHRIST THE YEA AND THE IMAGE OF GOD (ADDRESS)

2 Corinthians 3:1-18; 2 Corinthians 4:1-7

It is very helpful for us to have distinctly before our hearts what God is working for. He has been pleased to lay His hand upon us in sovereign mercy, and to bring us to the knowledge of His grace; and it is well that we should be exercised as to the object and purpose in view of which we have obtained mercy. I do not refer now to God's purpose as to the future, but to His present purpose. There is great power and stability in the apprehension of what God is working for.

The scriptures we have read suggest very plainly that God is working in order that Christ may be inscribed upon and enshrined within our hearts. The saints at Corinth were "manifested to be Christ's epistle ministered by us, written, not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tables, but on fleshy tables of the heart". Then the apostle could say, "God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God, and not from us". The latter scripture, no doubt, refers to the apostle, but it is true in principle of all those who have received the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

God has a definite object before Him, and it is a great thing when God's definite object becomes ours, for then we are sure to get on. Everything around us is passing away, but God has called us to know the blessedness of things which abide. Everything that pertains to that circle subsists in Christ. Our blessing is set forth in Him, and the glory of God shines forth in Him. God would have our hearts to be impressed and enriched with that which now subsists in Christ, things which are eternal in their nature and which are capable of filling our hearts with the deepest satisfaction.

I do not think the believers at Corinth had entered into what is here presented. They were scarcely prepared to appreciate it, and it is a principle with God not to cast pearls before swine. They were carnal, and Paul had only been able to feed them with milk and not with meat. Milk is, I think, a figure of christian blessings looked at from our side, that our sins are forgiven, we are justified, we are assured of the grace of God and know that we shall be in eternal glory with Christ. This is milk. A young believer delights to hear of all the blessings which divine grace has secured to him, and such food is proper for babes. One of the first distinct signs of growth is when a desire is awakened in the soul to look at things from God's side. Meat is a figure of

christian blessings viewed from the divine side. That is, we think not only of what is for us, but of what is for God.

The Corinthians had been greatly hindered by their condition and by their associations. As to their condition they were carnal; they were self-important and man was prominent with them (1 Corinthians 3: 1 - 7). They had not really known in power "the word of the cross" — the complete setting aside of man in the flesh in the death of Christ. Man was so big at Corinth that there was very little room for Christ. A carnal people can never expect an enlarged ministry, and consequently cannot be spiritually enlarged themselves. There are two conditions required for spiritual prosperity, self-judgment and separation. The first epistle was intended to bring about self-judgment, and the second to produce holy separation. The Spirit of God dealt first with their condition before He touched their associations, and this is ever the divine way. If our condition is right we can bear to have our associations put right, but not otherwise.

The Corinthians, instead of judging themselves, had been gratifying themselves in every way and even using divine gifts for self-exaltation. Along with this they were giving religious prominence to men, good men no doubt but still men, and attaching themselves to their favourite ministers. In connection with this it may be said that the broad distinction between the carnal believer and the spiritual one is that the former has man before him and the latter God. The spiritual believer recognises the necessity for the cross as that in which man after the flesh is completely set aside. When the Lord spoke of the cross to His disciples Peter was indisposed to accept it, and he had to be told that he savoured not the things that be of God, but those that were of men (Matthew 16: 21 - 23).

The ministry of righteousness has to do with the setting aside of man in the flesh, and this is in view of the ministry of the Spirit wherein is set forth all that subsists in Christ. If we do not receive the ministry of righteousness we are certainly not prepared for the ministry of the Spirit.

Paul had spoken to them at Corinth "the word of the cross", but it had not become effective in them by the Spirit. Therefore, though the apostle's heart was full of God's blessed things, he could not speak of them. They were not in a condition to know "the depths of God". A carnal condition is often the reason why believers are not able to apprehend divine things, so that they complain of things being over their heads which would be perfectly simple to them if they were walking in self-judgment and separation. Many have small enjoyment of spiritual things because they are held by so many links and

associations here. They are like balloons tied down to the earth; the ropes need to be cut before they can rise into their true blessings as saints.

There is One in whom all God's thoughts with reference to man have been brought to pass and who is at the same time the Image of God. I hope to be able to show you how all that is in that blessed Person is ministered to us by the Spirit to bring our hearts into divine satisfaction, and that, in result, we may be changed into His image.

Let us read 2 Corinthians 1: 19 - 21: "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, he who has been preached by us among you (by me and Silvanus and Timotheus), did not become yea and nay, but yea is in him. For whatever promises of God there are, in him is the yea, and in him the amen, for glory to God by us. Now he that establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God". I call your attention to the expression "in him is the yea". The fact that it was said of Jesus Christ, the Son of God that yea is in Him suggests the greatest conceivable contrast with Adam and his race. It was all nay until He came. It has often been remarked that Scripture gives the history of two men — one man in whom everything is nay, and Another in whom everything is yea. Wherever we look at man in the flesh — and his character is set forth in Scripture in many details as well as in general principles — we see the constant negation of God's will. In the garden of Eden, before the flood, under government, promises, law, in connection with judges, kings, prophets, in the presence of Christ in this world, or as brought into contact with the testimony of the Holy Spirit to risen and glorified Christ, it is always the same thing. Man in the flesh ever answers 'Nay' to the mind and thought of God. Indeed from Genesis 3 it was all over with man after the order of Adam. God might continue to test him and prove him in a variety of ways for four thousand years, but he was under death as the judgment of God from the moment of the fall.

From Genesis 1: 26, 27, we see what was in the mind of God as to man, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". It was God's thought that man should be representative of Himself; that is what is suggested by being in God's image. "After our likeness" gives the idea of moral similitude. If we think of this we cannot but see how man has given the nay to God's thoughts concerning him. And this comes out in detail all through Scripture. See Genesis 6: 6; Genesis 9: 20, 21; Exodus 32: 7; Psalm 53: 2, 3; Isaiah 5: 7; Mark 7: 20 - 23; Acts 7: 51 - 53; Romans 7: 18.

But not only do we see this in Scripture; we have found it to be so in ourselves: "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell", Romans 7: 18. We may have been good as men think of goodness, but there

is no true good in us because we do not find in ourselves any answer or response to the will of God. We cannot even make ourselves answer to God's mind when we have the strongest desire to do so. The flesh will not be subjected to God; it knows not how to answer 'Yea' to Him. The effect of finding this out is that we "do not trust in flesh", Philippians 3: 3. This is good preparation for the ministry of righteousness by which we learn how the flesh has been condemned and removed in the death of Christ. We see God's action with respect to the flesh at the cross. He has condemned sin in the flesh in Christ's death. Then the believer's attitude towards the flesh is that he does not trust in it.

How blessed it is to be able to turn to another Man, and to find that in Him is the yea! And it is of the greatest importance that we should see that Christ was in view long before Adam was created. Adam was not first in the mind of God but Christ. In the actual history of things here Adam was first, but in the mind and counsel of God Christ was first.

Psalm 40: 6 - 8 says, "Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire: ears hast thou prepared me. Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not demanded; Then said I, Behold, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me — To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight, and thy law is within my heart". I understand "the volume of the book" to be the sum of God's thoughts and purposes with reference to man. I do not mean with reference to Adam, but with reference to man in Christ.

And we get this voice coming out of eternity, "Behold, I come ... To do thy good pleasure, my God". Who but the Son could take up such language as this, and engage Himself to bring to pass everything that was in the mind of God, to bring out all that was hidden in the depths of God before the ages of time?

In connection with this let us read Revelation 21: 5, 6, "And he that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he says to me, Write, for these words are true and faithful. And he said to me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end".

Here we get a voice out of eternity to come when all that was in view from eternity past shall be accomplished.

The One who devoted Himself in the obedience of love to do the will of God according to Psalm 40: 7, 8, will "make all things new" and be able to say, "It is done". He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end"; in Him is the Yea. It is in time that things have become "old" by reason of sin, and it is in time that all these "old" things have passed away in the death of Christ,

so that all things may be made new in a universe of bliss to the glory of God for ever; and all this is accomplished by One capable of giving effect to all the counsel of God, even the Son of God in whom is the Yea.

Then, if we come into time, we find Him born into this world as the virgin's Son, and His first recorded utterance — indeed the only recorded utterance of the first thirty years of His life on earth — is expressive of entire devotedness to His Father, "Did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?", Luke 2: 49. God has preserved this utterance for us that we may see what characterized Him through the period of His hidden and private life. He came into humanity at its lowest point, and in every circumstance and responsibility that attached to human life from infancy to manhood He answered perfectly to God. In the midst of a vast moral desert He was as a bright and fruitful oasis. So that when the moment arrived for Him to be manifested to Israel a voice from the opened heaven said, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight", Luke 3:22. The Father delighted to single Him out, if we may so say, from all other men, to greet Him in the excellence and moral glory that attached to Him as answering perfectly to God in man's condition and circumstances here. He was the Holy One of God.

Then in the presence of the temptation by the devil (Luke 4) we see Him still answering perfectly to God. In Him was the Yea to all God's will for man, and nothing could move Him from His obedience of love.

Again, on the mount of transfiguration we see Him in His pre-eminence. Peter with mistaken zeal would have conferred equal honours upon Jesus and Moses and Elias. But neither Moses nor Elias (representing the raised and changed saints) could have been in glory with Jesus except on the ground of "his departure which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem", Luke 9: 31. His death was the theme on which these saints in glory conversed with Him. All that they were as in the flesh must needs be removed sacrificially by His death, and they must derive everything from Him in order to be His companions in glory. It is a blessed thing for us if we get in our hearts by the Spirit the light of a scene where everything is of Christ. Moses and Elias as servants of God were very highly honoured by Him and they obtained mercy to be faithful to an uncommon degree. But "Yea" was not in them; it was in Christ. And all their grace and fidelity as saints and servants was by the Spirit of Christ in them; it in no way sprung out of what they were as in flesh. So at the present day if divine gifts are in the assembly it is not that men may become eminent in the world by those gifts, but to constitute them vessels for the presentation and ministry of Christ. It was of Christ the Father spoke and it

was He who received from God the Father honour and glory when a voice out of the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son: hear him".

One more scene from the Gospels we may think of for a moment: "And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and having knelt down he prayed, saying, Father, if thou wilt remove this cup from me: — but then, not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 41, 42. This scene in Gethsemane must ever be most affecting to the hearts of saints. I need hardly say that we do not get atonement here — that was on the cross alone — but it was the unspeakable moment when all that was involved in the accomplishment of God's will was pressed upon the holy soul of the Lord Jesus. The drinking of the cup, the being made sin, the terribleness of death as the wages of sin, the power of Satan, and the judgment of God were all before Him. But in the presence of all this, and knowing it all as none other ever could, He answered perfectly to God, "Not my will, but thine be done".

Then at the cross all that had been anticipated in the garden actually came upon Him. He was in the place of sin and judgment and death, but in that place He gave a perfect answer to the glory of God. As the forsaken One He exclaims, "And thou art holy", Psalm 22: 3; He justifies the One who forsook Him in that solemn hour of atonement. He, and He alone, could take up the whole question of sin and sins in such a way as to maintain the divine glory in the highest possible degree, and open a way for divine grace and love to come out in blessing to men. How wondrous to see such a Person in such a place, giving a perfect answer to God even in the place of sin and death! There is a mighty power of sanctification in this if our hearts apprehend it aright.

Then when all the work of atonement was accomplished, "Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father", Romans 6: 4. He is outside the whole course of things here which are characterized by the presence of sin and death. He is risen from the dead and glorified at the right hand of God.

Having thus briefly traced the way by which He has reached the right hand of God as Man, I come back to 2 Corinthians 1: 19, 20. "For whatever promises of God there are, in him is the yea, and in him the amen, for glory to God by us". The promises of God were the outcome of His purpose, and in that purpose infinite thoughts of blessing for man were treasured, in the accomplishment of which all God's attributes and His nature of holy love have been fully manifested. Whatever promises there are, Christ is the Yea and Amen of them. That is, all God's thoughts of blessing for man are set forth in Christ. If we take the law as expressive of all that is good in man as a creature of God, where did it find its answer? Nowhere but in Christ. It was in His

heart. In a coming day God will have saints on earth with His law written in their hearts, but even they will be a failing people, and will need sin-offerings. They will have to find their blessing set forth in its proper excellence in Christ. The "Yea" will be in Him even for them.

As to ourselves we cannot learn the character or the extent of our blessings by our feelings, experiences, apprehensions, growth, or anything of that kind. Nor can we learn our blessings from Scripture in the same way as we might learn a science from a text book. Scripture leads us to Christ, and we find all our blessing set forth in Him.

Hence the gospel of God is concerning His Son (Romans 1: 1 - 3) and the full blessing of God is set forth in Him (Romans 8: 29). He is the Yea and the Amen, the Alpha and the Omega, of all God's thoughts of blessing for man. And He did not take that place as risen and glorified until He had removed by His death everything about us that was unsuited to God. Our sins and ourselves as in the flesh are gone. We are sanctified by God's will through His offering, and perfected for ever. As I said before, the ministry of righteousness unfolds how all that we were as in the flesh was removed by His death. Then we get the ministry of the Spirit to bring our hearts into the blessedness of all that is established in a glorified Christ. God's thoughts are brought into actual accomplishment in one Man alone, but by the Spirit He ministers of that Man to our hearts so that we may be in the present light and joy of His purpose before the moment of actually being conformed to the image of His Son.

What is established in Christ is "for glory to God by us". It is "by us" that God gets the glory of all that He has effected. The saints are necessary to the display of God's glory in the carrying out of His purposes. If His purpose was for the blessing of men it is certain that the glory of His purpose could only be secured by men being brought into the good of it. Hence we read, "To him be glory in the assembly" (Ephesians 3: 21), and when the holy city, Jerusalem, descends out of heaven from God she has the glory of God (Revelation 21: 10).

God has brought all His thoughts to pass in Christ, and soon we are going to be brought into it all actually, but in the meantime God works in us to establish us in Christ. God would have our hearts to be firmly attached to Christ and to all that is established in Him, so that we may be delivered from carnality and legality and that there may be "glory to God by us".

It is to this end that all that is established in Christ in glory is ministered by the Spirit to our hearts. This is not a ministry of claim or demand; it is a ministry that enriches the heart with the knowledge of Christ. The demand for what was suited to God in the law began with glory, but the ministry of the Spirit

subsists in glory. Nothing can dim it; there can be no failure in the things whereof it speaks. It shines from the right hand of God in undimmed brightness for ever. If we are not in the light and joy of it, let us see to our condition and our associations.

There is a present ministry to our hearts from Christ in glory of all that He is. The brightest glory is the place where we find the greatest gain. We never know the full gain of the gospel until we are in the light and joy of this ministry. It shines in heavenly light for our hearts, the gospel of the glory of Christ. All that is established in that glorified One is ministered to us.

When Moses came down from the mount with his face shining the people could not bear to look upon his face without a veil. They were in the flesh and they could not bear the glory. They were conscious of unsuitability to that which was made known to them of God. But now the light of glory shines after man in the flesh has been set aside, and after everything has been brought to pass for God's pleasure and glory in Christ. Hence there is no longer need for a veil; glory shines in the unveiled face of Christ to enrich and gladden human hearts. Thus it is a ministry of light and transforming power.

For not only is all our blessing according to God's purpose set forth in Him, but the effulgence of God shines forth in Him. Every ray of the glory of God can shine now into human hearts, for every perfection of God's nature and attributes shines out in that glorified Man. The thought of God was to set Himself forth in His universe in His glory and in His moral perfections. Now there is a Man in God's image and God has achieved His great thought as to man. There is not a single part of God's blessed character that is not set forth in Christ. Many things which could have no place in connection with Adam even in innocence, love, grace, mercy, holiness and so on, are fully set forth in Christ. He is the Image of God. So that the glad tidings of the glory of Christ shine into hearts to give the full knowledge of God.

All this exercises a most blessed attraction for every heart divinely taught. The glory welcomes one in the fullest possible way; it is the source of infinite blessedness for our souls. God ministers all this to us so that Christ may be written in our hearts, and may become our Treasure. Just as the sun is the light of the material universe so Christ is the Light of the moral universe, and we need to abide in His light. "Wake up, thou that sleepest, and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee", Ephesians 5: 14.

There is wonderful power in light. Flowers are colourless if grown in the dark. Many Christians lack the heavenly colour because they are not in the light of Christ in glory. They are not transformed. Why? It must be either because their condition is wrong, they are asleep; or their associations are wrong, they

are among the dead. If we were in the light of Christ we should be transformed. The light of God in the face of Jesus Christ must have its effect. If we were more beholding the glory of the Lord we should be more changed into His image. Beholding the glory of the Lord is the most practical thing in christianity. It displaces what is of ourselves and forms us in moral correspondence to Christ. If we are not changed it is a proof that we are not beholding the glory of the Lord.

Then true satisfaction is found in the knowledge of God. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shone into Paul's heart that it might shine forth for us. If this has become the treasure of our hearts it gives us an apprehension of the blessedness of new creation. God will have a universe of bliss in perfect suitability to Himself, and in which everything will carry the impress of Christ. As yet we have the treasure in earthen vessels, but we shall have "a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens", 2 Corinthians 5: 1. The vessel will soon be made to correspond with the treasure. "Now he that has wrought us for this very thing is God, who also has given to us the earnest of the Spirit", 2 Corinthians 5: 5.

May God give us to know more of the blessedness of all this! The man in whom was the nay has gone from before God in the death of Christ, and now we have the Spirit so that our souls may be in the light of the Man in whom is the Yea. As we behold the glory of the Lord we are changed into the same image and are in true liberty. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty".

"A MAN IN CHRIST" (ADDRESS)

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

In the fifth chapter of this epistle the apostle says, "So if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold all things have become new: and all things are of the God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ". It is our privilege to contemplate an order of things in which all is of God. In the chapter before us we see how Paul was privileged to realise in a special way what it was to be introduced to such an order of things. He had conscious knowledge of what it was to be "a man in Christ", and as such he was caught up to the third heaven and heard there unspeakable things. He was introduced in a very special way as a new creation man to new creation things.

Paul would not glory in what he was as a natural man, or even in what he was as a servant of Christ — save in his infirmities — but he made his boast of what he was as "a man in Christ". "Of such a one I will boast". He left behind all that was connected with his responsible life here when he thought of himself as "a man in Christ".

No one of us has realised what it is to be a "man in Christ" as Paul did. We have never been caught up to the third heaven. But it is a great thing for us to see that in relation to that order of things where all is of God we are either men in Christ or nothing. "If any one be in Christ, there is a new creation". Everything is of a new order, and on a new footing. "The old things have passed away"

— everything that sin had touched and spoiled has passed away for God in the death of Christ. All that attached to me as a natural man has come to an end in the death of Christ. How blessed to see this! Christ came here to bring to an end sacrificially the whole system of things which sin had touched and which had therefore ceased to yield rest and pleasure to God. If we follow things here to their moral end in the death of Christ we are prepared to come in view of Christ as the risen One, and to see that all things have become new in Him. Man is in an entirely new place with God in the Person of Christ. Righteousness and life of a new order have come in. All is of God.

Let us look at one or two scriptures in connection with this. In Galatians 2: 20 Paul had, so to speak, turned his back upon himself as a man in the flesh. Have we done so? We hear people talk sometimes about coming to the end of self, but it is not a point that is very commonly reached. It is a great thing if I recognize that there is nothing in me, as a natural man, that will do for God. If

one sees this one cannot be very well satisfied with self any longer. But there is a blessed Man who will do for God, and that is Christ. He died to bring me to an end before God, and He lives to be my righteousness and life for ever. When I see this, self is displaced, and Christ lives in my affections.

In Galatians 6: 14, 15 Paul not only turned his back upon himself, but on the world. The present world is an evil one; it is ruled by lust and pride, and it has crucified Christ. How can the believer go on with it? He is glad to turn his back on it. Luther said he got on very well with the world, for he thought nothing of it and it thought nothing of him. The world with all its glory was a despicable thing, a crucified thing, to Paul and he was despicable in the eyes of the world. He gloried in the cross which had brought this about. There was a clean cut between Paul and the world. Today the professors of christianity are so mixed up with the world that the line of demarcation is quite obliterated. There is not much glorying in the cross today.

But why does the christian turn his back upon himself and the world? It is because he has come in view of Christ, and has righteousness and life in Christ. There are two things which cover everything in the world, sin and death. In blessed contrast to this the believer has Christ for righteousness and for life. He has all, according to God, in the Man who is exalted at the right hand of God. There is neither righteousness nor life in any other. In Philippians 3: 8, 9 we see Paul ardently pressing on to have Christ for his gain, and to be found in Him altogether apart from the possibility of any intrusion of his own righteousness. It is only as found in Him and having Him for our righteousness that we are fitted for the holy associations and light and glory of a scene where all things are of God. How could we bring self in there?

Then there is another thing — He is our life (Colossians 3: 1 - 4). If you think of yourself as a saint and as brought by infinite grace into relationship with God, Christ is your life and Christ only. You may say, 'I am poor and small in the knowledge of Christ'. That is, no doubt, very true, but Christ is your life. All that is really life for you is in Christ at the right hand of God. We spend a lot of time in things which do not give us much true satisfaction. But the time we spend meditating upon Christ, and the things above, where He sits, is the time that is really of account in the history of our souls. We ought to be more exercised to lay hold of what is truly our life.

Then we have not only Christ as righteousness and life up there but we have the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8: 9). We have the Spirit of the risen Man at God's right hand. He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. It is our privilege to live, morally, by the Spirit of One who is at the right hand of God. This is christianity.

I dwell on all this to shew that in christianity everything is of an entirely new order, and it is all of Christ. You have to abstract yourself from what you are naturally and even from what you are in your responsibility as a servant of Christ down here, to get an idea of what it is to be "a man in Christ". Then you get an apprehension of what it is to belong to an entirely new system of things where everything is of God. Speaking of the "man in Christ" Paul could say, "Of such a one I will boast". Of himself as a responsible servant he would not glory, save in his infirmities, but he would glory in "a man in Christ". When you get the thought of what it is to be "a man in Christ" it fills you with divine joy. It is a rare privilege to live at a time when God is doing such wondrous things for the pleasure of His love, and presenting His thoughts and purposes to us so that we may apprehend, and have conscious knowledge of, things that are wholly of Himself.

The "man in Christ" has done with self and the world, and God opens a new scene before him. There is no barrier between "a man in Christ" and paradise. Paul was allowed to realise this in a remarkable way, he was caught up to the third heaven and there heard things so blessed that they could not be uttered in human language. He was not conscious of his body at all; he was only conscious of being "a man in Christ", and of deriving everything from Christ. How blessed to have such a moment! We shall not be caught up to the third heaven, but it is possible to have the consciousness, by the Spirit, of being "a man in Christ". This mortal body is an encumbrance. It is the vehicle through which the activity of the flesh manifests itself, and even when it is not active in this way it is an encumbrance. "We who are in the tabernacle groan, being burdened", 2 Corinthians 5: 4. Paul was, for a time, emancipated from the encumbrance that he might be wholly conscious without distraction of what pertained to "a man in Christ". We cannot realise it in the special way he did, but what he realised was proper to "a man in Christ". There is no barrier between a man in Christ and the place where Christ is. We ought to go about with a sense of that in our souls. We belong to the place where Christ is. Hence Paul could say, "Having the desire for departure and being with Christ, for it is very much better". But before he departed he was allowed to realise and enjoy in this peculiar way the scene to which he belonged. As "a man in Christ" he was in every way suited to the scene of light and glory where Christ is, and to which he was caught up. I repeat, we ought to go about with somewhat of the consciousness of this in our souls by the Spirit.

On the dark night of His betrayal the Lord said, "In my Father's house there are many abodes", John 14: 2. His own had followed Him into the deepening shades of His utter rejection here, but He opened up for them a scene of unsullied light and glory in company with Himself in His Father's house. He

gave them the knowledge of a place there with Himself in compensation for suffering and rejection here. The fact that He is there makes it our place. I am sure if we took this in, the present world system would not have the smallest attraction for us. Oh that we knew our place better as being with Christ where He is! We belong to that scene of light and glory where He is. Paul realised it in a special way, but could not put into human language the communications which he heard in that bright and blessed scene.

Now I should like to say a few words about what happened after Paul had thus been made specially conscious of what it was to be "a man in Christ". He had to return to his responsible life here as a servant of Christ, and in that life there was a danger of his being "exalted by the exceeding greatness of the revelations". He had to be preserved from this by a special discipline. Some people talk as though they had got beyond the necessity for such a discipline, but it is evident that Paul had not. The flesh was unchanged and was ready to assert itself had it not been checked by the holy discipline of God. A messenger of Satan was allowed to buffet him, and he was helped by this against the intrusion of his flesh. In principle it is so with ourselves. If we receive light as to our privilege as men in Christ, and have desire to walk in suitability to God down here, God helps us against the flesh by sending some discipline to check its activity.

What a contrast between "a man in Christ", enjoying his privilege as such and not conscious of anything else, and the saint in his responsible life down here needing to be buffeted by a messenger of Satan to keep in check the activity of the flesh! We need to keep these two things distinct in our minds.

It has been remarked that Satan is presented in this epistle as doing three things. He blinds the minds of them which believe not and he seeks to beguile saints from simplicity as to the Christ but when he can no longer blind or beguile he buffets, and God uses this for the great gain and help of His saints.

Paul prayed three times that the thorn for the flesh might depart from him, but the Lord did not remove it. It was good for Paul to have it. We do not know what it was, and this leaves the principle open for general application. It was something that kept Paul in the constant sense of weakness as to himself. Great pain is not so trying to a man as the sense of absolute weakness. A man can steel himself against positive suffering, and harden himself to bear it by resolution of will. But to be reduced to absolute weakness brings a man down as nothing else does. You are obliged to go down under weakness; you cannot gird yourself up against it as you might against external trials or even pain. Paul was brought down to be conscious of nothing but weakness in himself. His service was carried on really in resurrection power, as he says, "We

ourselves had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not have our trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead", 2 Corinthians 1: 9. All was weakness and death as to himself, but that was the way of God's power. Paul was so reduced that he could only go on by divine power. If all those who profess to be serving God today were reduced to this point one wonders how much of their service would continue! I apply it to myself. If all were set aside in me that is not really in divine power I fear much would disappear. But nothing would disappear that is of any real value in connection with the work of God. It is the practical setting aside of what is of the vessel that makes way for divine power to work in it. When Paul saw that the Lord's power was made perfect in weakness he could glory in his weaknesses and take pleasure in them. Think of a man taking pleasure in weaknesses! Did you ever hear of such a thing? Paul was not taking pleasure in weaknesses when he was beseeching the Lord to take away the thorn. Then how did he come to take pleasure in it? The Lord said to him, "My grace suffices thee". Beloved friends, it is a rare moment for the christian when he realises there is only one thing he cannot do without, and that is the grace of the Lord. How blessed for Him to say, "My grace suffices thee"! I understand it to mean that the Lord's grace would suffice to make Paul content even though reduced to utter weakness in himself, so that he should be perfectly happy in his weakness. That is what the Lord does first. He says, I will make you happy in spite of your weakness, and then I will reveal to you the secret that my power is perfected in weakness. His grace can make us content to be weak and small, and then His power can be perfected in our weakness.

All this exercise goes on down here in the one who has been conscious of being caught up to paradise as "a man in Christ". If, on the one hand, we touch the infinite privilege of "a man in Christ", we must be prepared, on the other, for the discipline of God which brings death in upon what we are naturally, so that we may prove the grace of the Lord, and learn how divine power is perfected in human weakness here. A servant of the Lord now with Christ used to say that the angels excel in strength but that saints excel in weakness. It was so with Paul. He gloried in his weakness that the power of Christ might tabernacle on him. Many christians are too strong to learn what this means. Will and energy are the great things in the world, and a great many think that what is effective in the world can be effective in the things of God. But it is not so. Divine power does not work along with human power. Human power has to be set aside that divine power may be perfected in human weakness. Many a man is no good in the service of God because he is too strong. If we pray for more divine power it is most likely God will answer by causing us to experience our own utter weakness and nothingness as never

before. This is humbling to us, but it is God's blessed and holy way of preparing vessels for His mighty power. The power of man must be set aside if the power of God is to come in.

I do not feel that I can say more. I just wanted to call your attention to these two things — what it is to be a man in Christ and as such to enter into divine privilege, and then to see what goes along with that, the exercises and discipline by which we realise our weakness and nothingness down here, and by which all that is of ourselves is set aside so as to make room for divine power. We see this very fully in Paul. He was put in prison and had many trials, but he says, "This shall turn out for me to salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ", Philippians 1: 19. All the trial and difficulty was a check upon the action of Paul's will, and thus it turned out for him to salvation. But for this there must be the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the manna fresh every day to sustain us in the wilderness according to the will and pleasure of God. We cannot do without the manna, the grace of the Lord, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. May we know more of the reality of these blessed things, that we may be here as vessels of divine grace and power!