

Union with Christ

and

In Christ

(2-volumes-in-one)

by

Theodore Austin-Sparks





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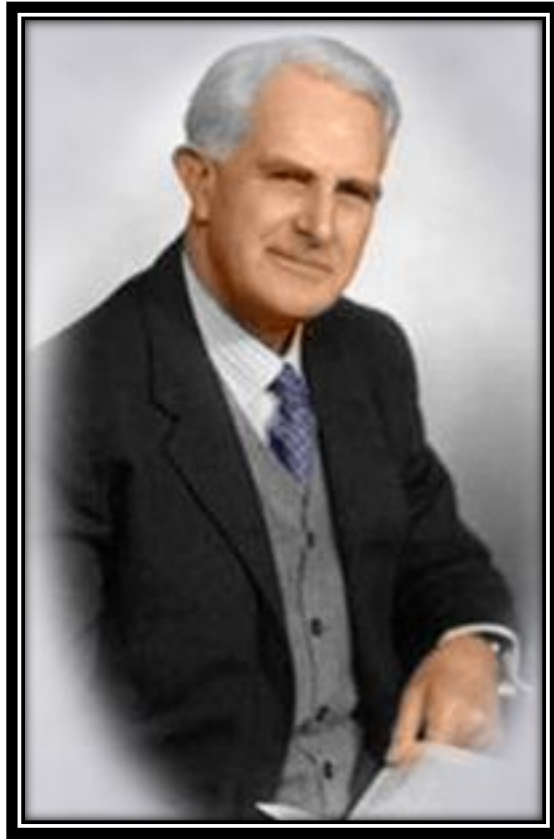
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A Biography of T. Austin-Sparks

(1888 – 1971)

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

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

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

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

In 1925 he paid a first visit to the United States as speaker at a Victorious Life Conference in Keswick Grove, New Jersey. He had begun to see, perhaps more clearly than many of his contemporaries, that the cross of Christ is central, not only to world history but also to human experience. To "lose his life" is the disciple's safe but costly way of entry to a

service that is marked by eternal gain, and the discovery of this fact explains and gives meaning to so much in life that the Christian otherwise finds difficult. One day in his study, while waiting on God for the needs of His flock, the truth that “it is no longer I, but Christ who lives in me” dawned freshly upon him with compelling power. Afterwards he often spoke of the “open heaven” beneath which, from that day on, he ministered.

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

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

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

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

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

As a consequence church prayer meetings, always a mainspring of the local testimony at Honor Oak, now ranged in vision over a wide area of the work of God in the earth. Missionaries went forth to work in fellowship alongside such movements, and Mr. Austin-Sparks himself was privileged to travel widely in ministry, not only in Europe and North America but also further afield in India and the Far East. Such opportunities for fellowship with those in whom the Spirit of God was doing His own original work were to afford him lifelong joy.

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

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

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

Union with Christ

A Conference Message by
Theodore Austin-Sparks

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CHAPTER 01

The Meaning of Christ

1. HIS GREATNESS IN THE SCRIPTURES

He is

- (a) The meaning of all things.
- (b) The Heir of all things.
- (c) The Idea or Nature of all things.
- (d) The final test of all things.

2. HIS PLACE - BY THE LOVE OF THE FATHER

INFINITE DIVINE LOVE THE MOTIVE AND POWER

This is revealed

- (a) In all the Scriptures.
- (b) By the opposite of love to all Divine activities.
- (c) By the Father's demand that the Son be honored.

3. THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST IS SPIRITUAL AND MORAL

- (a) Heaven knows it.
- (b) Man senses it.
- (c) Hell attests it by attempted corruption.

It is implicit in

- (a) His satisfaction to God.
- (b) His redemptive work.
- (c) The Spirit's operations.

"These things spake Jesus; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, Father..." (John 17:1).

"That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us" (John 17:21).

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one" (John 17:23).

Introductory

Union with Christ is the heart or center of all that has been revealed of God's thought concerning man and of man's relationship to God. Union with Christ is like the hub of a mighty wheel. There are many spokes to that wheel - election, creation, redemption, salvation, sanctification, glorification; and then, like a series of subsidiary spokes - repentance, faith, justification, conversion, regeneration, and so on. These are the spokes of the wheel, but they all center in Christ and radiate from Christ and reach the rim, which is God. They unite us in Christ with God.

To give all this its true and full value, it is necessary to contemplate or have revealed to us the meaning of Christ, to see what an immense thing has taken place by the Son of God becoming the Son of man, by God becoming incarnate. It is a question of our being taken, not into Godhead or Deity, but into God's Son incarnate.

Now, the first preachers of the Christian evangel preached Christ. They did not, in the first place, preach salvation or sanctification or forgiveness or judgment or heaven. That does not mean that they did not preach those things they did; but not in the first place. They preached Christ, and all those things were included in the preaching of Christ, Christ as inclusive of all and as transcending all; for, after all, such things as salvation and sanctification, forgiveness, justification, are subsidiaries, they come afterward. Christ was before them all and Christ will be after them all. They are inside of Christ, but He vastly outstrips them all.

The Meaning of Christ

We come, then, to consider the meaning of Christ. Understand that we are underlining the title *CHRIST*. That very title carries the significance of a mission. It is not the title of His essential Godhead. Anointing, which is what the word means, is unto a mission. "*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth*" (Acts 10:38). Let that govern all that will be said, otherwise it might be easy, if you were so inclined, to raise your eyebrows at different points and scent, as you might think, false doctrine. In our consideration of union with Christ, we are keeping a very distinct line between His Deity and His Christhood as Son of man. Having said that, let us think now for a little while of His greatness.

1. His Greatness in the Scriptures

His greatness as in the Scriptures is seen in several relationships.

(a) In His Relationship with God

Firstly, His greatness is seen in His relationship with God. Here we have only to cite several familiar passages, but always with new inspiration and stirring of heart.

"Who is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15).

"The effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance" (Heb. 1:3). Quite remote from our comprehension and understanding, and certainly from our explanation; sharing the Divine glory before the world was. We commenced to read of it. "*Father... glorify thy Son*"; and then just a little further on, "*Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*" (John 17:5). I say, we can never begin to understand or evaluate the meaning of union with Christ until we have sensed something of that stupendous thing which has happened in His coming forth out of such a state and, in the form of man, going the way of the Cross. The most amazing thing that has ever happened in the whole history of the universe is found in the combination of the words which I have just quoted from the Scriptures. And then, that this Man who was the effulgence of God's glory, and the very image of His substance, "the image of the invisible God," sharing the Divine glory before the world was, should be spat upon, mocked, jeered at, and meet all that terrible sin. It is wonderful that we should be called into union with Him; not just to be His friends, not just to be fellowworkers or partners in some Divine business, not just to have some kind of formal relationship with Him which we call a Union,

but to be one with Him in an utterness which we are going to see later. *"We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph. 5:30. A.V.) "Joined to the Lord... one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17)*. Something has happened to make that possible, and therein is the whole story and wonder of the infinitude of God's condescending love. Well, the Scriptures, in the first place, set forth His glory, His greatness, in His relationship with God, and many hours could be spent in tracing it out. We pass on.

(b) In His Relationship With All Created Things

Next, His greatness is seen in the Scriptures in His relationship with all created things. Our analysis divides this into four heads.

(1) The Meaning of All Things

Christ is the meaning of all things.

"All things were made through him" (John 1:3).

"The world was made through him" (John 1:10).

"One Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things" (1 Cor. 8:6).

"In him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him" (Col. 1:16).

"Of the Son he saith... Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands" (Heb. 1:8,10).

"It became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things..." (Heb. 2:10).

The meaning of all things; that is, the "why" of all things, the answer to the question, What does it all mean? Go abroad in the earth, plunge down into the ocean, soar into the constellations, compass the created universe, comprehend all celestial intelligences and say, "What does it all mean?" and the answer will be in a perfected universe showing forth and expressing the glory of the Son of God, Son of man, and so you will know what it all means. That is no flight of imagination. That could easily be tested and proved up to a convincing point. Given that we had the ability and a certain mass of data, with Divine enlightenment resting upon it, that is capable of substantiation now. If we knew the inner meaning of the created things, we should see Divine meanings, eternal, spiritual meanings, all of them finding their explanation in Christ. That, of course, is a universe of inexhaustible wonder, but that whole universe, the Scripture says, is going to be filled with Him and manifest Him eventually, and when this universe, redeemed and perfected, reaches the end for which it

was brought into being, it will be one mighty, comprehensive and still inexhaustible expression of God's Son. That is the meaning of it. He is the key to everything that is happening.

Oh, that we had eyes to see and understanding to grasp the significance of things that are happening! Christ is the explanation, He is the meaning of all things.

(2) The Heir of All Things

Christ is the heir of all things. *"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things" (Heb. 1:1,2).* The question immediately arises, When did God appoint Him heir of all things? Well, if all the former passages are right, Christ was appointed heir of all things before ever He made them. If all things were made through Him and unto Him, there was a point at which the Father made Him heir of all things, and it is just on that very matter of His heirship that history turns. Firstly, then there was the marvelous conception of this universe as constituting the inheritance. You do not need that I should strain at trying to say anything about the universe as a conception. Then there is the conception projected, with a view to its being brought into execution, followed by creation, and immediately, or very soon it would seem; the inheritance disputed and marred, but instantly its redemption revealed. Redeemed, reconstituted, perfected, possessed: that is the history of the inheritance, and what a lot that history contains. I said a minute or two ago that if we understood all that is going on, we should see that it centered in and raged round Christ. Why? Because He is heir of all things, and this disputing of His inheritance is the reason for all that is going on. Oh, how much Scripture could be crowded into that. The destroyers of the earth, what are they doing? Well - blindly, of course - but through their evil inspiration and instigation, they are seeking to destroy the inheritance of God's Son, and because spiritual men and women are the best evidence of that fact, they know the concentration of more than ordinary forces upon them for their destruction; for they are the redeemed of the Lord being reconstituted and perfected unto a presentation to Him as His rightful inheritance at last in glory. We know that this is true, that it is the inheritance of God's Son which has involved us in this long, long story of destructive intention from evil powers.

(3) The Idea or Nature of All Things

Further, Christ is the Idea or Nature of all things. I think here we only need two brief quotations.

"Whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29). The Idea or Nature of all things is expressed in those words, *"the image of his Son."* The other passage which is from Ephesians 4:10, I think bears that out. The object of His ascending up on high was *"that he might fill all things."* Those two complementary statements answer this Idea or Nature of all things. What is the Idea behind, what is the Divinely intended nature of all things? Well, just the image of His Son. Of course, that embraces the whole of that comprehensive teaching of the New Testament of likeness to Christ. It is a far-reaching and all-governing idea in the New Testament, likeness to Christ, or, as it has often been put, Christ-likeness. That is the Idea of the existence of all things, that is the Nature of the being of all things; to be filled with Him and conformed to His image. You never will be conformed to His image unless you are filled with Him. How much New Testament teaching you can put into that. It is everywhere.

(4) The Final Test of All Things

Lastly, Christ is the final test of all things. In Acts 17:31 we have these words: *"He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."* The literal rendering is not, by a man, but "in a man whom he hath ordained." That word "ordained" means horizoned. God has made His Son the horizon of everything. Everything has to come within the horizon of this man and be judged according to Him. You see the point. Christ is the criterion, Christ is the standard, Christ is the measure of that great judgment of the world which God has fixed, the final test of all things.

That means that the judgment of the world will be according to how it measures up to Christ, its standing in the light of Christ, as to its attitude toward or relationship with Christ. God will not judge on any other ground. That is a very simple formula for judgment. If God had to take us one by one and judge us on the numerous things which belong to us by our inheritance, our birth, our upbringing, by the fortunes or misfortunes of our lives, well, He would have His hands full, speaking after the manner of men, and it would be something that would require a standard of righteousness so infinitesimal, so exhaustive, as to be almost unthinkable. God is not going to judge us upon the number of our sins, whether few or many, or upon our temperaments, or upon anything like that at all that comes down to us in the bloodstream. His one simple solution is, What is your attitude to My Son? What is your relationship to My Son? How do you stand here in the horizon of Christ, not just as a person, but in relationship with Him as a kind, what He means in Himself? What is your attitude, relationship and measure where the Son is concerned? On that all judgment will be based.

And notice, that is a very righteous judgment. It says "*he will judge the world in righteousness.*" Thank God, that takes in the very thing that so many complain of through their lives, the disadvantages of their inheritance, of heredity, of early training and so on. My dear friends, take heart from this, that on none of those matters is God going to judge at all; it would be unrighteous. He brings us all down to the one issue of our relationship to His Son. Where do you stand with Him? What have you done with Him? What are you making of Him? How are you progressing in your conformity to His image? That is the basis of judgment, and the only one. Christ is the criterion, the final test of all things.

Christ in the Old Testament

Well, let us return again to this contemplation of His greatness as seen in the Scriptures. If we take the Scriptures as a whole, we find that the Old Testament is shot through with expectation and anticipation. From the very beginning someone is demanded, someone is foreshadowed, someone is proclaimed, and someone is manifested in the midst of the nations; for this Someone was manifested in Israel whom God planted in the midst of them.

Let us look at that for a few minutes. Someone is demanded, demanded because of a calamitous failure which has brought the whole creation under arrest, into what the Bible calls vanity. Failure has made of the whole creation an abortion. Someone is demanded by reason of that failure, someone is required to repair it. Someone is demanded by intuition. Man feels intuitively that someone must come sooner or later.

This expectation and this demand can be traced in very remote civilizations. Universally we find the evidence of this waiting for something, this expectation that someone must come to answer the enigma of life and the world. The whole thing is an enigma, a problem, a puzzle. Man is an abiding quandary, everything is a great contradiction. Many of those who have probed the most deeply in order to try to explain the problem have been driven into blank, terrible despair. Yet man *MUST* solve this problem. The Bible is just full of that.

But by continuous intimations someone is demanded. It seems as though there is a reaching of a certain point, and now there is an intimation that something is going to happen, and then it recedes, and after a time it comes on again like a tide, only to recede once more. These successive tides in history intimate all the time that something will happen, or someone will come; until you reach the day when He did become incarnate, and the spirit of expectation was ripe in just a nucleus, a remnant. They were waiting, expecting. "*The HOPE of Israel*" (Acts 28:20). That hope was not only the hope of Israel, it was the hope of the whole creation. Paul tells us that the creation was subjected in hope (Rom. 8:20); it was

there throbbing throughout the centuries. Someone is demanded along every line, and that demand is revealed in the Scripture.

Someone is shadowed forth. The Old Testament is full of the shadowing forth of someone in personal types and in symbols, and, although typology and symbolism and the figurative aspect of the Old Testament has perhaps been a bit overdone and sometimes discredited by exaggerations and straining, there does lie right on the face of things, without any straining at all, a whole system which speaks of something other than itself. It demands that which it signifies, typifies, symbolizes, for men cannot live for eternity on symbols, on types, on figures, on foreshadowings. Someone must answer to all this!

Someone is therefore proclaimed. The whole of the Old Testament contains the proclaiming of a someone by the Spirit of prophecy. Immediately Adam falls and the tragedy of sin occurs, the seed of the woman, who should put all this right, is brought into view and proclaimed. He is again proclaimed in Abraham - *"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"* (Gen. 22:18). In Jacob: aged and dying, Jacob, in blessing his sons, came to Judah, and proclaimed those beautiful and classic words - *"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be"* (Gen. 49:10); a bringer of peace looked for out of Judah. Did He come of Judah, He whose Name is Peace, Shiloh? All that while ago was He proclaimed. In Moses - *"Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me"* (Deut. 18:15). Ours is an unfortunate translation in its use of the words "like unto me." It just gives a wrong turn to what Moses actually said. *"Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee, of thy brethren,"* not "like unto me," but, *"as he raised me up."* You can think about that. How did He raise Moses up? But here is the prophecy of the coming of this prophet. Then you want to read the whole statement in Deuteronomy 18 and 34. In both those chapters you will see that the reference is to a greater than Moses. Well, we cannot go on. All the prophets prophesy of Christ, they were all proclaiming Him.

We close with what is perhaps the most difficult aspect and most difficult thing to say, but I believe it is here. This someone was manifested personally in the midst of the nations, that is, in Israel. You will recall the many theophanies, Divine appearances in man-form in Israel, and you will recall that in not a few instances it is impossible to discriminate between the one who is called the angel and the Lord Himself. They are interchangeable terms, synonymous words. Of the same person, first the word "angel" and then the word "Lord" is used. The angel, as it seemed, took up the conflict with Jacob, and he eventually cried, *"I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved"* (Gen. 32:30). That angel of the Lord appeared to Abraham and was confessed to be the Lord. The Lord said to Israel, *"Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Take ye heed before him, and hearken unto his voice: provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgression: for my name is in him"* (Exod. 23:20,21). Who is this?

Paul said about the smitten rock, that the rock was Christ (1 Cor 10:4). But do you remember this, and this is the point of the whole incident, that when the Lord was giving commandment to Moses about smiting the rock, He said, *"I will stand before thee there upon the rock"* (Exod. 17:6). It was the Lord who was the rock, says Paul; it was the Lord who was smitten to save the life of His people, and you cannot smite the Lord twice. Once smitten, and, blessed be God, that is enough. Then it is said that the rock followed them (1 Cor. 10:4), meaning, I think, that the waters of the rock, the values of the rock, the efficacy of the smitten rock, went with them on their way *"and that rock was Christ,"* it was the Lord. *"I will stand before... the rock."* So I could gather up many other of these instances, where the identifying of the one called the angel of the Lord cannot be made without saying that it was the Lord Himself, and, seeing the connections, you cannot but see the Son of God. If that wants proving, go to the last book of the Old Testament, where mention is made of the messenger of the covenant. *"The Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple"* (Mal. 3:1). That word translated "messenger" is the same word translated elsewhere "angel." Who is this angel or messenger of the covenant? *"The Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple... But who can abide the day of his coming?"* It is none other than the Son of God. But there He was manifested in Israel, again and again personally present, not as yet incarnate, but in manifestation nonetheless.

Well, there is the Scripture. Now, you see, that is the Old Testament. It is shot through, we have said, with expectation, and anticipation. Someone must finally and fully come to answer to it all.

We know that the New Testament, on the other hand, is just brimful of testimony that all this related to and was fulfilled in Christ. The Bible says, in a word: HE, CHRIST, MUST BE MADE EVERYTHING OF. When we have glimpsed something of His greatness, we are at least in the way of glimpsing the wonder of union with Christ. Oh, what a great thing it is! Surely we can now confirm that with which we started. It is the hope of everything. Everything centers in Him and radiates from Him to the bounds of God's created universe. Union with Christ is the heart of all the revealed thoughts of God concerning man and man's relationship with God.

CHAPTER 02

His Place – By the Love of the Father

Having, in our last meditation, covered the ground of the greatness of Christ in the Scriptures as the meaning of all things, the idea and nature of all things, and the final test of all things, we now go on to consider

2. His Place - By the Love of the Father

Infinite Divine Love the Motive and Power

His place is by the love of the Father. Infinite Divine love is the motive and the power which lies back of His appointment to the position which has been given to Him.

This is revealed in several ways. It is revealed

(a) In All the Scriptures

Many of these Scriptures will immediately spring to mind. Let me give you a small selection.

"Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24)

"Through whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:2).

"Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands" (Heb. 1:10).

But before He laid the foundation of the world, before the world was, the declaration is that He was the Beloved of the Father.

"The Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth" (John 5:20).

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:35).

"Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again" (John 10:17).

"Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you" (John 15:9).

"A voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17).

"That we should be... to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

"Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col. 1:13).

And so we could go on and on, but we have quoted sufficient to shew very fully that the Scriptures reveal that Christ has His place by the love of the Father.

But not only is this so in direct and definite statements, but everything points to it. Every Old Testament figure of Christ brings out the idea of love with fullness and inheritance in view. I think we often overlook what seems to be the all-too-fleeting and transient glorious morn before Adam fell, but it is a picture of Divine love for the man whom God had created. Love - yes; love planning, love giving, love companioning, love desiring. It is a picture of love, and all with fullness, a great inheritance, in view. And did we but realize it, the rebellion and disobedience were a blow at the heart of God more than anything else, the God who so loved the world. Adam, we are told, was a figure of Christ (Rom. 5:14) before the Fall, only a figure, but there is enough there to show the love-relationship between God and man, with desire for man's fullest inheritance. We will just glance at these outstanding personal representations or figures of Christ.

Isaac - it is impossible to be blind to the love element surrounding Isaac. He is the love of the father, a particular and peculiar love, and it was said that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen. 21:12). The inheritance is along the line of the son of his love.

Joseph - there is perhaps no greater figure of Christ in the Old Testament than Joseph, but what a son of the father's love! And how did he come to glory, to fullness? By the jealous love of One greater than his earthly father, because he was a figure of Him that was to come. There is no mistaking the prefiguring of Christ in Joseph. Sold for twenty pieces of silver, to all intents dead and out of sight, cast into the deepest dungeon, tasting the bitterest travail of soul, and raised to glory and power to bring life to his brethren. Well, it is patent that here is a figure of Christ, but the governing feature is love unto fullness.

Or take Israel. Surely, if there is a mystery in history, it is the mystery of God's love for Israel, when viewed in the light of all they proved to be. God spoke of Israel as "My son," "My firstborn," "I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals" (Jer. 2:2). God is there speaking like a lover concerning Israel. Amazing love, all with the inheritance in view. Is it not strange that the nation which has drawn out the love of God by way of example so utterly, should become the nation to exhibit so utterly the opposite of love for God, and for the Son of God? I could add much more as from the Old Testament to this story of figures of Christ in terms of love with fullness in view.

There is another whole series of symbols and types of Christ which carry the thought of preciousness and glory, preciousness, that is, in the eyes of God. There is a subject for you to study. Glory is according to heaven's standard, and it is all Christ implicit. We leave it there. Is it not revealed in Scripture that He holds His place by the love of the Father, both by direct statements and by numerous figures and symbols and types?

(b) By the Opposite of Love to All Divine Activities

But then this same fact is revealed by the opposite of love to all Divine activities. We always get something confirmatory from the opposite side. One of the strongest confirmations of this very thing comes from the intense antagonism of the adversary to this appointment and position which Christ holds by the love of the Father. Oh, what that has provoked through history, and does still provoke, in an opposite way! All the jealousy that you can see associated with those very figures that we have mentioned, suspicion, hatred, malice, prejudice, pride, murder, is but an expression of it. All these and much more have broken out against the Son of His love. How do you explain it? We sometimes sing,

*Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run.
He gave the blind their sight.*

Even a gross man of this world could say, "I find no crime in him" (John 18:38), "I wash my hands of the blood of this innocent man," Why this rage and spite? The answer is that it comes from hell below. It is because of this love of the Father and the position in which that love has placed Him. Do not think that this is just a statement of some facts. This lies at the very heart of our union with Christ. *"As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you."* You see to what union with Christ leads us. Well, that in passing, lest you might think I am just passing on so much data and matter. No, hell has given its own mind on this matter. It is very significant. Anything, no matter what it is, which has the advancement of the interests of Christ in view immediately becomes the object of sinister jealousy, suspicion, hatred, prejudice, and, if possible, murder. This opposition springs up without reason so far as men are concerned, without investigation, without enquiry. It simply, spontaneously comes into being, and, is encircled by the most unreasoning and unreasonable of attitudes, many of which collapse on honest enquiry. But there it is. The question still remains as to how men are caught in this kind of thing. But we know full well where it comes from, and it is the opposite of love to all Divine activities in relation to the Son.

(c) By the Father's Demand that the Son Be Honored

This is revealed, thirdly, by the Father's demand that the Son shall be honored. "This is my beloved Son," came the announcement from heaven, "hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). Here we see the Father's jealousy for the position of the Son. He will not bypass Him, He will not allow even an ardent apostle to step in front of His Son. We see Jesus "crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9). Peter, referring to the transfiguration, said many years afterward, "He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (2 Peter 1:17). He received from the Father honor.

In the book of the Revelation this is taken up in the great concourse. *"Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing"* (Rev. 5:12). The Father honors the Son. I have not quoted from John's Gospel because there it is what the Son Himself says about the Father's honoring of Him. We accept that, but there is much more that confirms it. His place is by the love of the Father, therefore the Father demands that the Son be honored.

Now that is a very practical thing. Do you think that you will ever bypass Jesus Christ and get to God? The Father's appointments are all with His Son. Now, that is comprehensive and covers the whole creation. In Him, through Him, unto Him, were all things created, therefore God's appointment was with His Son in the whole creation. That is to say, God would meet everything created on the ground of His Son. Now when the creation through its first overlord, Adam, made a breach with the crown rights of God's Son and handed them to the rival, Satan, what did God do? According to Paul's marvelous statement, God acted at once and right at the heart of the whole creation He wrote "dis-appointment." His jealousy for His Son's inheritance meant that He would not look outside of His Son to rival or rebellion. Paul says that "the creation was subjected to vanity" (Rom. 8:20), and from that moment the creation has at its very heart disappointment. That is true about man. Whatever his attainments, his successes, his achievements, his inventions, the last word is disappointment. Whatever there is that is fair and beautiful in creation around us, it goes so far and then fades and dies; everything is subjected to death and corruption. That is disappointment. The appointment is broken. The appointment for glory, for fullness, for consummation, is made with His Son, and outside of His Son there is no such appointment, but all is disappointment. Is that true? Why do not men see that? We Christians know it, if no one else knows it; but, blessed be God, we have come back to God's appointment and the disappointment has been wiped out. God has come back to us, to appointment in His Son, to union with Christ.

This union is not something official, something legal or formal. It is affectional. It is not obligation that governs here. Love never stops at obligations, but always goes on to the utmost possibilities. Union with Christ is of that character because it is the center of God's love. You will have, of course, to do quite a lot of quiet meditation on all this and relate all that we are saying about Christ to the Christian life. *"Translated... into the kingdom of the Son of his love"* (Col. 1:13). That aspect alone is amazingly wonderful and full - *"the Son of his love."* Union with Christ brings us on to that ground, into that realm. Oh, do not have comparative ideas of this love, as though the love of God were graded according to the degrees of goodness or of badness which He may find. His love for you and me is the love which He bears for His Son. That is the revelation. To be united with Christ is to be enfolded in all the dimensions of His relationship with the Father as the Son of His love. I have not said "in all the dimensions of His relationship with the Father as very God," but as Man, as His Son Jesus Christ.

3. The Greatness of Christ is Spiritual and Moral

You may not like that word "moral," but I am using it in a particular and limited sense. "Spiritual" looks in a Godward direction, and speaks of His union with the Father. "Moral" is a word which comes in after the Fall, and relates to a whole system of things which originates with fallen humanity - morals; so that when we speak of moral, we mean that which touches downward, not upward, that which links with evil and not with God. Christ's greatness therefore is spiritual by reason of His life with the Father. His greatness is moral by reason of His perfect separation from that which is from beneath, the realm of the fallen nature with all that it means. That is all I mean at the moment in the use of those words - spiritual and moral, and as you read your Gospels that is what you find to be the background of everything. It is these two things all the time that are the ground of the challenge. Perhaps we shall see more of that as we go on.

But I want to remind you that the whole of the Old Testament is constituted upon the idea of a coming Holy One, or Righteous One, or Righteous Servant. *"Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption"* (Ps. 16:10). That is in a Psalm, and is quoted, as you know, by Peter on the day of Pentecost concerning Christ. *"Thy holy one."* That One, by that title, was recognized in the spiritual realm.

Demons knew Him altogether apart from incarnation. *"I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God"* (Mark 1:24). That takes you a long way back in the Old Testament. From a prophet we get Paul's quotation - *"My righteous one."* There was from the beginning, when sin entered through what we call the Fall, a quest for a holy one, for a righteous one. Heaven was in quest and all the activities of God in the earth bear on this quest for a righteous one. Where shall a righteous man be found? If he can be found, he is the solution to the whole problem. Countless figures of the righteous One are given us. Abel had witness borne that he was righteous. Because of his faith, Abraham was called righteous. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. You who know the Bible do not need me to follow that further. The figures of the righteous One are there in great numbers. But with all the figures there was failure, leaving the quest for the fully righteous One still unanswered and unmet, and the Old Testament closes still with the cry and sigh for this righteous and this holy One. The creation is left in suspense. Men were still awaiting the realization of a glorious intention, and destiny was hanging upon an essential state, and that an inward state in man; not a ceremonial state, but an inward state, that is, a state of inward righteousness and holiness. Everything was in suspense until that state was found in man. All this great and glorious intention and destiny was impossible of realization without a state. I want you to focus upon that and think much about it. God did His best to help men on, to encourage men on,

to get them there, but may I say it reverently, there is a sense in which God's intentions broke down. The situation did not allow of His just getting a people through to glory by a sovereign act. God could not do that. Everything depended upon an inward state. There could be no realization, no answer to God's intention, no possibility of reaching the intended end without an inward state. He got them as far as He could by ceremonial conditions, but we know how that failed. The contrary inward state was far too much for the ceremonial. No, sacraments do not achieve it, there must be an *INWARD* condition of righteousness.

Ah, well, blessed be God, the inward state of Christ was the state that made everything possible. Yes, the excellence of Christ was His inward state, not His legal status or His official position. Always remember that. He has gone far beyond all ceremonies, all sacraments, all rites, all ordinances, all that system which broke down. He surpassed it all because of what He was inwardly. That is His excellence.

(a) Heaven Knows It

Heaven knows it, and that is why He was anointed of the Holy Ghost; for, while you have anointings in the Old Testament, they are partial and transient, there is no fullness and there is no permanence about them. They were for the fulfillment of a temporary purpose. He was anointed of God in fullness and finality. He evermore is the Anointed, and God gave to Him the Spirit without measure. To anoint, as we have often said, is simply a symbol of God committing Himself. Do you think God would commit Himself like that to any state that did not answer to His requirements? Heaven attested Him: *"Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

He triumphed through testing. His inward state was subjected to every form and kind of testing at the defiled hands of the Evil One himself, and He triumphed over every attempt at spiritual defilement, that is, to get something in between Himself and God to spoil that relationship and fellowship and walk with God in purity, in holiness, in truth. He triumphed upward, and He triumphed over every effort to get Him to make a contact with the cursed earth, and so make a link with that which was outside of the blessing of God. That is His excellence. It is inward. Heaven knows it

(b) Man Senses It

Man senses it, and, having said that, everybody knows what that means. There is an instinctive rising up in man when mention is made of Jesus Christ in any way. It varies from

ridicule and the charge of being "goody-goody" to open hostility, and it is because the conscience of man is touched, and he feels uncomfortable and out of place in the presence of this One; he feels there is something wrong with his being. You know it. Without so much as a word, you are marked, if Christ is in you. Man senses this spiritual and moral excellence, and he resents it. He senses the greatness of Christ and feels poor and mean and despicable and uncomfortable in His presence.

(c) Hell Attests it by Attempted Corruption

Hell attests it. We have said as much - Hell attests it by attempted corruption. Because Christ is the object in view, the heir of all things, and because this inheritance is to be holy and incorruptible as conformed to the image of God's Son, the only way to cheat Him of His inheritance and defeat this Divine purpose, to circumvent the course of the Son of God, is somehow to introduce corruption. That is the history all the way through. Much springs into mind.

His Greatness is Implicit in

(a) His Satisfaction to God

His greatness is implicit in His satisfaction to God. That goes without saying. God, being what He is, infinitely holy, in attesting His Son as well-pleasing to Him and as offering a sacrifice well-pleasing to Him, thereby expresses His utter satisfaction regarding Him. In figures, in types, in symbols, the verdict on all that is of Christ is that God is satisfied. His greatness is implicit in His satisfaction to God.

(b) His Redemptive Work

It is implicit in His redemptive work, for no sinner can save a sinner. You can profit no one beyond the level of your own life and experience. For Christ to achieve an uttermost, final, consummate redemption and salvation, He must be utterly and consummately sinless. His redemption is based upon that.

(c) The Spirit's Operations

Again, it is implicit in the Spirit's operations, which means, firstly, that the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, and secondly, that He is the Holy Spirit. This makes everything subject to experiment, so to speak. The greatness of Christ is not a doctrine, not a declaration of some fact. It is open to practical proof along all lines. Now then, try to get away with known sin in the presence of the Holy Ghost, and see how you get on. Try to grow in the spiritual life without dealing with something upon which the Holy Spirit has put His finger, and see how far you get. There is your proof. The crown of all God's intentions is found in the gift of the Holy Spirit to dwell within, and all His operations are upon the ground of the absolute greatness and glory of Jesus Christ. He is working to the most minute point. Is that according to Christ? Is that glorifying to Christ? Does that reflect Christ? We are at once arrested in our spiritual life, and we will make no further progress, even were we to live for the next half a century, if the Holy Spirit has said, "That is contrary to Christ," and we have shut our eyes to it and ignored it and have been rebellious. The Holy Spirit is jealous for Christ. What is the Christian life after all? It is not to conform to a set of doctrines, to obey a set of regulations. Christianity is Christ, and there is nothing else to it, and the Holy Spirit keeps us to that. Everything, therefore, is subject to testing. All that we have said is brought up as a practical issue by the Holy Spirit.

There we must leave it for the time being, but are you just glimpsing now something of what union with Christ means? Oh, blessed be God, union with Christ means that God is utterly satisfied with Him, and therefore with me and you as in Him. Have you got hold of that yet? That is one of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, but how long we take to get hold of it. We are so afraid that we shall not be coming up to standard. You just get a firm faith-hold on Jesus Christ as your answer to God for all your needs, and the Holy Ghost has got His ground. It is Christ, not what I am, but what He is, and that covers all questions. God is satisfied in Him, and that has glory as the issue. *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col. 1:27). You see, you can go on. He is the answer, and this is all of the grace of God, marvelous grace, boundless and free. Union with Christ answers every question, satisfies God and brings us to glory.

CHAPTER 03

Eternal Union with Christ

We are going to resume our meditations on union with Christ. Having been occupied with Christ Himself, the meaning of Christ, seeking to set the background, lay the foundation, in some little understanding of His greatness and of His place, we now should be able to follow on with the meaning of our union with Him. You will see that the New Testament gives us various conceptions of that union. These are not different unions that is to say, the similes used of these unions do not apply to different bodies of people. They are only aspects of the one union, but each one has its own particular significance and value.

So we begin with

1. Eternal Union with Christ

Let us first of all look at the first chapter of the letter to the Ephesians:

"Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world" (verse 4).

"Having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (verse 5).

"In whom also we were made an heritage" (verse 11).

And if you ask, When were we made a heritage?

"Having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will" (verse 11).

"To them that are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:28-29).

"Elect... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:1,2).

"...The men whom thou gavest me... thine they were, and thou gavest them to me... Keep them in thy name which thou hast given me" (John 17:6,11).

I ought at once to say that we are not embarking upon a theological discussion or argument. This matter of election or foreordination or predestination has passed almost entirely into schools of doctrine and has split the Church into parties through the ages, and it still remains largely an academic subject, to be debated, argued, wrestled with intellectually. For our part we will have none of it. It would be unprofitable, it would get us nowhere and we are not moving in that realm. We are seeking spiritual values, practical values for our own spiritual lives, and so we lift this matter right out of the realm of argument and debate and

seek to see it in the light of Christ. It is entirely governed by Christ, for it is only in Christ that it exists.

But, before we go further, I want to say this. *This matter of election relates to the Church and must be confined to the Church.* (I would prefer to call the Church by the name of "the elect," because the very word "Church" has become an ecclesiastical conception.) It belongs to the Church, the Church belongs to it, and its real meaning has only been divulged in this dispensation. We are given to understand by the Word of God that all previous dispensations were pointing to, leading to and heading up to this dispensation, as though there were a drive behind them to reach a dispensation of fullness or completeness. They were all partial, imperfect, unsatisfactory, all just reaching a certain point and then fading out and waiting for the next phase. So phase passed to phase, and on to another phase, and still there was the waiting, the hoping, the expecting, the requiring, and then this age or dispensation came. It is called in the New Testament the "dispensation of the fulness of the times" (Eph. 1:10). That is a very significant little phrase. The times are made full, all the times are made full, in this one. All those which lack fullness and finality are filled up in this one. This one gives that which they lacked and needed; this is the dispensation of the fullness, or completeness, of the times. This is what the Apostle calls "the ends of the ages" (1 Cor. 10:11).

Now, it is helpful if you can arrange the ages as segments of a circle rather than in a straight line. If you take the straight line idea, you leave a lot of unfinished ends, one after another, but if you arrange them in a circle, then you find them all meeting at one point. They are not just unfinished ends in themselves, but they find their fulfillment at one point: all the ages gather round and meet at one center - the age in which all the ages meet. "Upon whom the ends of the ages are come": that does not only refer to past ages. It refers also to future ages: for they come into this, they take their character from this age, they take their meaning from this age, so that ages past and future are centered in this dispensation. And when this dispensation comes in in fullness - for, although it was introduced in a way by the coming of Christ in the flesh, the age did not come in fullness until the day of Pentecost: it would seem that on the day of Pentecost heaven could wait no longer, the Holy Spirit could wait no longer, all Divine purposes could wait no longer; and immediately they had the signal - the signal being Christ taking His seat at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens - immediately they got that signal, it was as though they all rushed in and brought this marvelous sense of arrival, of having come. There is a lot in that - "When the day of Pentecost was now fully come": it has probably a larger sense than that it was well into the hours of the day. It proved to be as though everything had been waiting for this everything had been looking for this, everything had been breathless in its suspense for this, and there was such fullness in that day and with the coming of that day that it has overflowed backward and forward into all the ages - fullness of meaning to the past and fullness of character to the future. It reached back to past eternity and it reached on unto the ages of

the ages. What the fiftieth year and day meant in the Jewish economy was far transcended on this "Day of Pentecost."

And what happened on the day of Pentecost? Well, the Church was born: the age of the Church in fullness commenced. We are told distinctly by the Apostle that this whole thing, this mystery, had been "hid for ages and generations; but now hath it been manifested," and that the ministry is "to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God" (Col.1:26; Eph. 3:9). You see, it is this "elect" which is the heart of the ages and of the universe.

(a) The Fact Governed by the Meaning of Christ

And why therefore is it so important? Why all this? Why is this age such a great age, and why is it that in this age heaven's fullness has been poured out? Why all this excitement, if we might so put it, on the day of Pentecost and thereafter? Well, that is just the point in our whole meditation. It is all governed by the meaning of Christ. Christ is God's Son and He is called "the firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15), God's Firstborn, and everywhere in Divine revelation that designation means the *HEIR*. He is the "heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2). He must have an inheritance. The idea of the Firstborn is nonsense if there is no inheritance. Its very sense is that He must have an inheritance. "In whom also we were made a heritage" (Eph. 1:11). What is the "also"? Look at the context. "To sum up all things in Christ... in whom also we were made a heritage." "We" - who is meant by the "we"? The Church. The Church is a part, the central part, of the vast inheritance of God's Son on which we have been speaking earlier in this series. "The Church is the main part, the most important part, of those all things that form the inheritance of God's Son. "In whom also we were made a heritage". Simply, it was this. God determined an inheritance for His Son. God knew what that inheritance would be - we will at least cede Him that. Even an earthly father intending and deciding to give his son an inheritance would have some idea of what it would be. And then he would certainly not leave it to chance: he would secure it, he would see to it that there was an inheritance to have. So God created all things through and unto Jesus Christ His Son. He made His Son the horizon of all things. That is, the whole inheritance was horizoned and circled by His Son; He made "in Christ" to be its sphere.

Now, that is very important, because it is not only a statement of a comprehensive truth. It is a statement of a discriminating truth. The Bible, the New Testament, makes it perfectly clear that there is that which is not in Christ and there are those who are not in Christ. That "in Christ" is quite discriminating. There has been a good deal of playing fast and loose with these fragments. "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22), and that has been given a comprehensiveness which it will not carry. In Christ you shall be made alive; out of Christ you will not. "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not

the Son of God hath not the life" (1 John 5:12). "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). "In Christ" is a discriminating sphere as well as a comprehensive inheritance. There is also all "out of Christ."

Well then, allowing God to choose for His Son an inheritance, to define the inheritance, to create the inheritance, to determine that the inheritance should come to Him, we surely will allow that, being God, He foreknew the "in Christ" people. That is as far as I am going to carry the argument side of it.

Of course, there is all the time pressing in and insinuating itself the question, How do we know? That is where we move, if we will, right out of the realm of mere doctrinal discussion. All that argument, discussion, analysis and so on is largely due, either to man's insatiable curiosity or to his unfathomable pride - that streak in man which will not let God know anything unless man knows it. God must not know anything, do anything, unless we can explain it. Now, God's explanations are always practical; they are never theoretical or intellectual. They are always practical and they are always spiritual, and when you recognize that, you realize why it is that you can argue and debate and discuss and analyze, and pursue the whole thing along the line of reason and intellect until you go to the grave, and have never settled the thing finally at all. The reason for this, as you well know, is that God has never intended to explain Himself intellectually at all.

And yet there is a more complete and utter and glorious answer to all the problems and all the questions than the intellectual one. When you come to peace and rest and assurance and satisfaction in heart, that is a better argument than anything else. Someone put the whole matter of predestination and election this way. You come to a door, and that door is Christ, and on the outside of that door is written, "Whosoever will may come"; and you pass through the door, and look on the other side, the inside of the door, and you see, "Chosen... in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). It is inside that you discover the reality of election, never outside. You will never have the answer to that question, Am I of the elect? outside. You have to put away all your questions and come to the Lord Jesus: the answer is experimental, it is spiritual. The question vanishes then; it just disappears. We shall come back to that presently. What we have been saying is that the fact of eternal union is governed by the meaning of Christ, and by that which He inherits, as a Son.

(b) Transcending the Fall of Man

Eternal union transcends the fall or rebellion of man. Man's rebellion does not cancel God's purpose concerning His Son; his fall does not denote God's defeat - not by any means. God, from His side, though He is revealed as hurt, saddened, grieved, and involved in a new

situation, nevertheless, as sovereign God, goes tranquilly on. Man has rebelled, man has fallen. It makes no difference to God's purpose, not a little bit of difference. He continues quietly on the heavenly line and begins to lift man on to the heavenly line again through faith. That is the story of the Old Testament - men being lifted back on to the heavenly line through faith.

Faith has one function. The function of faith is to lift out of the ruin; out of the ruined race, out of the ruined world - out of time back into eternity. It is to lift us out from here, from ourselves and what we are and what we are involved in, up on to the heavenly level. The Old Testament shows that that is the function of faith all the way through. Every time God called for an exercise of faith it brought a man out of where he was and put him into union with God in heaven. Abraham; Israel, a heavenly people: with that bit of blue on the border of the garment of every man in Israel saying that he did not belong down here, he belonged up there, in heaven: he was walking by faith. Faith's one function is to regain heavenly ground. That has, of course, a multitude of aspects and applications, but do remember that. Every time there is a challenge to faith, that is the issue. Am I going to stay in myself or am I going to stay in God? Am I going to stay in this world or am I going to abide in heaven? That is always the issue with faith, right down to its minute details. Dispensations are only different forms of the operation of faith. Faith is the same in every dispensation. Different forms of faith's operations are represented by different economies from time to time, but faith is the same, faith is timeless, dispensationless. Faith is above all dispensations and yet it embraces them all.

You see what that means. Faith makes a heavenly people in every dispensation. Faith has the same effect all the way through history. It counters that drop into something not of heaven, not of God. It counters that, contradicts, denies, works against it. Faith at once brings you back before the Fall. It transcends man's rebellion and man's fall. That is the argument of Paul in the first chapters of the Roman letter. Faith puts you back somewhere. It is called justification. It makes you right, puts everything right for you and with you, positions you again as though you had never fallen, "in Christ." Faith counters it all. The order of faith commenced immediately man rebelled and sinned, and by faith Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the others were heavenly men. God reacted in that way, and so the eternal union now transcends the Fall, through faith.

(c) Enhanced by the Redemption of Man

Eternal union is enhanced by the redemption of man. When man fell, God was not defeated. It only meant that He brought into operation a provisional measure or economy which He had already worked out. Just at that point some terrible things have been said in order to try to support an erroneous teaching. I have heard it dogmatically stated that the

Fall was in the Divine intention. God intended man to fall in order to show His grace. If you can accept that man had to fall, that it was in the Divine plan that he should do so in order that grace might be revealed - accept it, if you like; I cannot. What I see is the Fall not being in God's intention or will at all: He would have had it otherwise. But He had foreseen it and had provided for it, and when it took place He brought in His provisional measure of redemption, a measure which He had already worked out, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world - He put that into operation.

Just as the higher qualities of any person come out in an emergency: it is in an emergency that you discover what people's qualities are, and sometimes emergency reveals something you never suspected: just as this is so in the human realm, so transcendentally was it true in the Divine. The emergency brought out something very wonderful in God. It brought out grace, and two words from that time were combined. Before that it was one word: sovereignty. After the Fall it was sovereign grace, sovereignty working through grace, grace the handmaid of sovereignty. No, God did not intend the Fall. At least, that is my conviction. But God is always, always has been, more magnificent in an emergency. We have discovered that. It is the excellence of God that comes out in our emergencies. It was like that with the Fall. Grace came to light.

Perhaps you are still wanting to enter into the argumentative realm. If man had never fallen, look what we should have lost. We should never have known the magnificence of grace. How are you going to answer that? Well, let us look at the human family for a moment. Here is a father and there is a little child. Does it require that all the wonderful, gracious gifts and endowments of the father's love be lavished in order to draw out the love of the child for its father? Not at all. The little child loves the father, and, where it is an ideal case, loves the father without the father having to do all sorts of gracious things to win that love. It loves the father, because, well, it does love the father, and the father could not wish for anything more than that. Translate that into the realm of God and the children. We, if we had gone on, if there had been no Fall, would have gone on in utter love and devotion. That is what the Father wanted - and, mark you, God is always trying to get us on to that plane of loving Him just for Himself and not for what He does for us. That is the highest love. We do not get there, but that is what He is after. Have we said enough on that matter? We must hasten to a close.

The Holy Spirit the Custodian of the Eternal Purpose

The Holy Spirit is eternal; He is related to purpose; He is the link with Christ; and He is the earnest of the inheritance. That is to say, when we receive the Holy Spirit, we are at once joined to Christ: therefore we are joined at once with God's purpose concerning Christ. We are therefore linked with eternity and have left time. Is that too fine a way of arguing? We

are linked with eternity, for the Spirit is eternal. The Spirit has not just come to be here with us for the little while of our life here, just a temporary guest staying for a night and departing. The presence of the Holy Spirit within at once links us with timelessness, and in that timelessness with the eternal purpose of God concerning His Son, and in that purpose with the Son Himself as governing all; and when we receive the Spirit we receive the earnest, the token, the security, of the inheritance of Christ. That is wonderful. That is where we come back to what we were saying. We have been secured by the indwelling Spirit as Christ's, as belonging to Christ, and Christ is secured to us for ever. The Spirit is the earnest of the inheritance. This is the inspiring answer of God to all questions about election. Have you received the Spirit? If you have not, you have no answer to any questions. If you have, you have the answer to every question, and particularly to this one. Union with Christ is the answer to all our questions.

Union with Christ is a crisis, a definite act, instantly giving a sense of - This is the answer to everything: all my questions are answered, not in my brain but in my heart; to everything that I have tried to understand and grasp and comprehend I have the answer inside. It is like that. Yet note this. The receiving of the Holy Spirit, while bringing that immediately - *"The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16,17)* - while that is true at the inception of the Christian life in union with Christ, note this: that a life in the Spirit and with the Spirit is a continuous course, or succession, of proofs of election.

Perhaps you have never thought of that. If we do really walk with the Holy Spirit, we find that He is leading us into things that we never thought of, never intended - but, as He does it, we have to say, This is not something that has just arisen, this is something that was intended by God; I am just coming into a program; the Lord has not shown me the whole program, but this is like item after item on the program. Is that not the story of the book of Acts? The Holy Spirit has a program. He has not revealed it, but as they move in the Spirit, how the whole thing is a mosaic. How wonderful it is! This thing was ordained from eternity. You could not avoid it. God is working to it and holding us to it. *"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10)*.

You look back on your life. You may be disappointed in many ways with your part in the business. You may be able to see many falterings and blunderings and mistakes that you on your side made. You may have sometimes felt that you were not the person for that job; God had made a mistake. Some of us have felt like that. And yet, as we look more deeply into God's ways with us and know God's principles, we see a wonderful logic in it all. You and I are called for something, laid hold of by God for something, put by God into something, and we feel, God has made a mistake: I am not the person for this, I ought never to have come into this, I have no qualifications for this, I am altogether the wrong peg here!

And yet, somehow or other, God does it. He enables you, He carries you through, He accomplishes the work to your own surprise and wonder. As you lay hold of the Holy Spirit, it is done - that is, if you do not sink down into yourself and give up and draw out because of what you are - but you lay hold of the Holy Spirit and you get through and marvel that you have got through, that the Lord has done this thing through you, through me.

That is very consistent with God's principles, that is no contradiction. It is most consistent with the deepest principles of God. No flesh shall glory in His presence. It is all coming back to Him. God - mark you - elected "the foolish things of the world... the weak things... the things that are not" (1 Cor. 1:27,28). It is the same word; He has elected. It is quite consistent.

Yes, His ways are past finding out. "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform," but He is consistent with His principles. A life in the Spirit is one succession of confirmations that God is working out a plan. Only rebellion, stubbornness, self-assertiveness and all forms of self-life will hinder or arrest; but a life in the Spirit will be a constant succession of proofs, of evidences, that you were chosen for something. God is not dealing with you just from hand to mouth, piecemeal. It is all worked out. Good works foreordained, "afore prepared, that we should walk in them." If we walk in the Spirit, we walk in afore prepared works; whether we see it or not, it is a fact. But it comes out, wonderfully so, and we have to go down and say, Well, Lord, forgive us for arguing, forgive us for discussing the matter, forgive us for putting over our minds and what we think about it against You: You are wonderful, Lord. And we worship, and that is the proof of election, and you do not want better proof than that. It is all inside of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 04

Creational and Racial Union

2. Creational and Racial Union

"If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17, R.V. margin). (Note the translation, a correction and an improvement upon the King James' Version.)

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

"To make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things" (Eph. 3:9).

"For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Gal. 6:15, R.V. margin).

"So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (notice the marginal alternative to the last clause - "let us also bear the image of the heavenly") (1 Cor. 15:45-49).

In this sequence of aspects of union with Christ we are following the natural order: that is, that which is natural first, and then that which is spiritual. We are passing by way of figure and representation in the natural to the spiritual meaning. That is the Divine order; the Lord indicates that the function of everything is to lead on to the spiritual. And, of course, in this matter of *CREATION*, we are keeping *MAN* particularly in view. I want to be as simple and as practical as possible, and I am quite sure that no one will be offended at that.

We begin this matter of creational and racial union with Christ by reminding ourselves that God had a pattern for creation, and worked to a pattern; and that pattern for the whole creation was a Man, and that Man was His Son, the Archetype of all created things. If man had not rebelled and fallen and departed from the way of the projected pattern, sooner or later - we are not able to say how long it would have taken - but sooner or later, probably sooner, he would have arrived at that dimension. He would have been conformed to the image of God's Son, he would have "conformed to type," he would have come to the Archetype of all things. But he did rebel and depart from that way. Redemption comes in to

recover him to the way, and, just as it was *BEFORE* the necessity for redemption, so *IN* redemption, God's Son is the pattern.

Now that is quite a simple statement, and very easily understood; it will not tax you a little bit. But there is much more in it than that. It is what that type is, that Archetype. That, of course, represents all the difficulty for us; but it is the whole work of the Spirit of God to perfect the creation according to the original pattern.

Now, how can we put that in a way which can be understood? Let us put it firstly in a very simple form. When we, who have never done so before, pass from the Western world to the Far East, having never met anyone from the Far East, having never read anything about the Far East, but are suddenly - that is, as quickly as modern transport can take us - are suddenly taken from our world into that world, we find that we have got to learn everything all over again. Everything is done exactly the opposite way round to the way we do things. All the thinking is in just the opposite direction. All the acting is just contrary to all our training and constitution. It is so completely another world, in mentality, in conduct and habit and procedure and standards and values, and everything else, that we really do not know where we are. We are completely, as we say, at sea. We have to stop. It takes some people half a lifetime or all a lifetime really to get the mentality, to think the other side of the world, to adjust, to adapt. It is said to be someone of very considerable gift who can be in every way one of those people, without a flaw, even after many years.

But you could take it further than that. I am hesitating as to whether I ought to say it, but there was a time in my life when I used to go to theatres - many years ago! I remember that there was a play called "The Man from Mars." It was a very humorous thing, and I have often thought about it since. A man from Mars came to our earth, looked at everything. "What is this?" "Why do you do it like that?" "That is not how we do it." So he went round everything, comparing; everything was so strange, and most of it so ridiculous, so foolish; he went round putting everything right according to Mars. You see what I am getting at.

The Lord Jesus Christ is such a Being, such a Man, as has never been in this world before. He is in Himself the personal embodiment of a world which is another world from ours; and when we come into Christ, we are utter strangers to everything that belongs to Him, and we have got to learn everything all over again. Our thinking is all wrong, all out of the way, it is all different - our standards, our ideas, our judgments, our calculations, our expectations: yes, the whole constitution is another. In everything He is different, and the new creation is like that. Notice - "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things are passed away behold, they are become new. But all things are of God." That is the difference.

So that becoming a Christian is something far more than adopting a set of doctrines and teachings and theories and ideas, practices and forms. It is coming into a new world, a

strange, to us faraway, world, for which we have naturally no capacities at all. They all have to be given to us, and we have to start all over again, learning new ideas.

Well, that may sound simple, but it is not simple in practice. We stumble scores of times every day over that. Christ offends us - and He alone knows how we offend Him. It is like that every day. That is the Christian life - being transformed. It begins with this new creation, this racial union, this coming into, not the second Adam, but the last Adam. Everything is finished in Him, there will not be a third, there will not be any more. This is final.

As I speak, without premeditating, I recall a legend - the legend of St. Christopher, as he was called. Christopher was an immensely powerful man, physically, and his one quest in life was to find someone more powerful and to overcome him - or at any rate, to find someone more powerful than himself. He heard of someone more powerful and went and sought him out, but found that he was nothing remarkable. But this someone noted his quest and told him of the devil, of Satan, as being far, far more powerful than he. So Christopher went and found Satan, and he found him to be so much more powerful than himself that he sold himself to be the servant of Satan; and he faithfully served Satan as his much more powerful master for some time: until one day someone mentioned the name of Jesus Christ - and Satan fled for his life in terror.

And Christopher said, "Well, there is evidently someone much more powerful than Satan; I am going to find him." So he went in quest of this One, Jesus Christ, and he came to a hermit and told him what he was after, and the hermit said, "If you go and act as ferryman across this river, taking people and their burdens over and giving yourself to humble service like that, you will find Jesus Christ." So away went Christopher to the riverside, and built himself a little hut, and day and night he took the ferry over, and the people and their burdens, in calm and storm.

After some time he heard the cry of a little child, a little boy, and the little boy wanted to go over the river. Well, said Christopher to himself, this is not worth the ferry, so he hoisted the boy up onto his shoulder and stepped into the river. It was not long before the wind came up and the river became almost tempestuous - but something else was happening. This boy was getting intolerably heavy, at every step the boy got heavier, and at last poor Christopher was beaten, just beaten, by the weight of this boy on his shoulders. He had never known anything like it, "Who are you, boy?" he gasped. "You are going to drown me!" And the boy said, "I am Jesus Christ." And Christopher said, "You are my Master!" And of course the legend says that the boy baptized him in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and from that time he was the bond-slave of Jesus Christ and became St. Christopher.

Well, it is legend, but I think it serves my purpose. You take on Jesus Christ and you are taking on more than you know. You may take Him on lightly. You may take on the Christian life glibly. You may think it is child's play; but it will not be long before you have something to cope with that is more than your match. You have a universe upon your shoulders, and unless Jesus Christ gets inside, you will go down. You see the point. Oh yes, it is very easy to sign a decision card and say you will be a Christian, to act under some emotional persuasion and call yourself Christ's. You take on Jesus Christ, and you will find before long you cannot carry Him, He will have to carry you. He is far too great for us. That is what we are finding every day. He is too much for us, unless we have as complement the assurance of being in Christ, which is Christ in you.

But that is just it. Christ is not only the type, the figure, of the creation - He is the life of the creation. He embodies the creation as well as the creation embodying Him.

Having said that, let us now consider Creational and Racial Union under the following headings: Constituted; Conditioned; Cautioned.

(a) Constituted

We pass from Adam as type to Christ the Antitype, and then to ourselves in Christ. Adam was constituted pre-eminently with capacity for Divine relationship. Union with God in Christ is spiritual. The medium of union with God in Christ is the human spirit. Man was constituted with a spirit because God is Spirit, and the human spirit was that which made it possible for man to have union and communion with God. The link between the human spirit and God the Father, in the Son, is the Holy Spirit. Union with Christ is all a spiritual matter. That is why we have become a new spiritual being. In the last Adam, in Christ, the union with the Father and the communion with the Father were perfect, but this was by reason of His human spirit - I am speaking of Him now in incarnation - by reason of His human spirit and the link of the Holy Spirit: so that His union with the Father was a perfect union. He lived, walked, spoke, acted and laid down His life, in perfect oneness with the Father. Everything was received by Him from the Father: He even had to obtain from His Father authority to lay down His own life. The oneness was complete, but it was wholly spiritual.

Now, in our coming into Christ, into the new creation - our human spirit being quickened and renewed and restored to its place, and we receiving the Holy Spirit to be the link between our renewed spirit and Christ - relationship with God is immediately established. All that sense of God's remoteness has gone. One of the blessings of conversion or regeneration, of coming into Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit, is that the sense of God

being far off, remote, inaccessible, has all gone. He is near, very near, very real. Union has been established.

And then by an established spiritual union, that very constitution - that is, a renewed spirit linked with the Lord by the Holy Spirit - becomes the basis of an entirely new world, that world being Christ: a new world, a new creation, a spiritual world, a spiritual cosmos, where we begin again to learn, to learn, to learn from infancy everything as new. Much harm is done to the spiritual life by not recognizing that. Christianity has become such a system, such a way. "Get saved; get busy!" - and that is Christianity, and much of our phraseology has taken the meaning of an earthly system. For instance, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" has become a bit of liturgy, and its meaning as heaven's way of doing God's will has been lost to view. The Holy Spirit, if He had His way, would be causing us to act as we would not act naturally, and speak as we would never speak naturally, and think as we would never think naturally, as though in another world altogether - often to our own amazement that we should ever talk or think like that. That is not the way we are made. Yes, but we are being made all over again; it is another world, this creation which is in Christ Jesus. I think I need not labor that further.

Everything is now spiritual. Do remember that sin is fundamentally spiritual because it touches relationship with God. Relationship with God is that which is spiritual. Sin touches relationship with God. Sin is against the design of man's being: so that when we sin we are defeating the very design of our being: we are working against our very destiny from God's standpoint. We were designed for fellowship with God. We were designed for the kingdom of the heavens - but do not make that geographical: the kingdom of the heavens is a spiritual order - and sin being spiritual works against the very design of our being, and we know it. We know that it touches the very matter of relatedness to God.

Sin is not doing this and that and that. You cannot call sin by a whole assortment of names. That only comes out in a world like this. You say - This is sin and that is sin. Well, you may be right, but you have to get behind all these names, which are names for aspects of sin. Sin is one thing; sins are another. Sin, which is behind all sins, is that which touches our relatedness to God; which touches the very design of our being and defeats the end for which we have a being and were constituted. Sin is spiritual and salvation is spiritual. The Christian is a spiritual person, in this sense - that relationship with *GOD* is established, and everything that is according to *GOD* is brought into view, and the whole system of the kingdom of the heavens becomes the Holy Spirit's sphere and basis of activity for our transformation.

Have I gone out of the realm of simplicity? I think you can follow that. This kind of Christianity is very different from the Christianity that is current, that is popular, which is - You must do this and that to be a Christian. It is something far removed from that! Now let us pass on.

(b) Conditioned or Probationed

After Adam was constituted pre-eminently with a capacity for Divine relationship, he was put on probation, and this with a view to graduation. What would be the graduation if he successfully passed his probation? His graduation would be transfiguration. I said a little earlier that sooner or later that is what would have happened. Adam would have been transfigured, which means he would have been glorified. He was on probation with a view to graduation. You see, the course of the Son of Man is the course of every child of God. There is a birth by the operation of the Holy Spirit. That is the Son of Man, that is every child of God. There is a baptism into the will of God, because, whatever else baptism may mean, over it all is this - an utter committal, abandonment, separation, unto the will of God; dead to all else, alive only to the will of God. The Son of Man took that position, and you and I are born again with that in view, with that before us - of being dead to the one race, and alive in the other only unto God. Then, on that ground, He received the Spirit: coming up out of the water the heavens were opened and the Spirit rested upon Him. The receiving of the Spirit should be the course of every child of God.

And then how strangely He was led right into the probation, right into the condition, as though now everything was prepared: He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. The Son of Man was on probation, being tested, tried, not only in the wilderness for forty days and nights but for some considerable time afterward, being assailed along every line along which He could be assailed, from hell, from the world, from friends: under test, on probation - but triumphant. It is not without significance that it was at the farthest outward point of His journeys, from which He turned and went straight to the Cross, that He was transfigured, as though that were the goal of this Man. The end of this Man was the transfiguration. The rest, up to Jerusalem, was for us, not for Himself. It was for us, to bring us into that same way - the birth, the baptism, the receiving of the Spirit, the triumph of faith, the transfiguration. We shall speak about the transfiguration when we reach the consideration of Consummated Union.

(c) Cautioned

Adam was warned, was admonished, was made aware that there was a choice of two ways that he might take, a choice of two decisions that he might reach; and he was cautioned, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Cautioned - with a view to what? Oh, not only to personal transfiguration, but to inheritance; constituted with a view to Divine relationship, conditioned with a view to transfiguration, cautioned with a view to spiritual ascendancy unto inheritance. You can call it world dominion, if you like.

That is what it was for the first Adam, that is what it was for the last Adam, and that is what it is for the Church - dominion together with Christ, in union with Christ.

But we are on probation now. We have been born of the Spirit, we have been baptized into the will of God, we have received the Holy Spirit. We are on probation, not with a view only to personal transfiguration, but on probation for dominion. We are up against things, and things are up against us. The enemy has not been annihilated; the Lord has left him. Just as He allowed the enemy to get into the garden, just as He never acted to prevent him from coming to Adam, so He has done nothing to keep the enemy out of our way or to keep us out of his way. He has allowed him a tenure, and He permits him to assail us and drive us and test us along every line - with one thing in view. It is not our personal salvation or our personal glorification. It is that we may be with Christ in dominion.

The letter to the Ephesians makes that perfectly clear. That is, indeed, the object of the letter to the Ephesians. It is not primarily an individual thing; it is only individual in so far as the individual forms a part of the corporate. It is the Church that is in view there, and the Church is in the heavenly warfare because the Church is "his Body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all," and it is the Church which is to be the vehicle and the vessel of His universal dominion. Do remember, when Satan assails and the Lord lets him "have a go" at you, and you have a bad time, that it is not just some personal matter, some individual affair. It is related to this vast intention of God to make the Church His city of government for the universe throughout the ages of the ages. That is what is in view, and it is not at us, it is at the Christ, through us, that the enemy is striking. It is that union, that oneness, as set forth in this Ephesian letter, that is the occasion of it all. Satan knew very well that, if he struck the individual, he struck the rest; if he captured the individual, he captured the rest; if he dethroned Christ from the individual, he dethroned Christ from the race and enthroned himself: and he did so, and was called the prince of this world. But we have seen the Divine reaction to that, in bringing men back to heaven spiritually and going on with the purpose in justification, as though nothing had happened, going on with it with men of faith; but it is a tested faith, a tried faith. We know that. It is all to bring us to spiritual ascendancy and victory; into the inheritance, into dominion.

Now I close by reminding you, as I shall do in other connections, that inheritance is the key to the conflict with Christ, and the Church. And heirship has two sides. It has a legal and a spiritual aspect. We are legally heirs when we are born anew. When we are in the new creation we are legally heirs by birth, but there is a very great deal of difference between the state of legal heirship and the act of spiritually inheriting. The Bible makes that distinction clear, in this connection as in the others, as we shall see. The letter to the Galatians is built around this very thought. "So long as the heir is a child, he... is under guardians and stewards until the term appointed of the father" (Gal. 4:1,2). And then the letter goes on - If children, then sons: we are all sons, by faith, that is to say, legally, even if

we are not actually and spiritually in possession of the meaning and value of sonship, that is, of the inheritance. We are legally inheritors by birth, but we become actual possessors of the inheritance by spiritual growth.

Is that clear? Well, if it is not clear in teaching, ask yourself whether it is clear in practice and experience. How many Christians are enjoying the inheritance, are possessing their inheritance, are even progressing towards the possession of their inheritance? Many are not, yet they are children of God, legally heirs. Between being a legal heir and becoming a spiritual inheritor, something may happen so that you miss the inheritance. The New Testament is all the time telling us that we have a great inheritance - then do not miss it; we have great rights - then do not let them go; we are called into something from eternity - but be sure you "make your calling and your election sure." It is the difference between our legal status and our spiritual state.

So it is in this new creation. We have to do our learning spiritually; we have got to pass from the one realm to the other progressively; we have got to battle, to enter into the conflict, not for our salvation, but for our inheritance in Christ. We have to be tested, tried, not so that we shall prove ourselves good Christians, but so that we may learn what spiritual ascendancy is, and thus in spiritual ascendancy come into the inheritance. You will be calling to mind those seeming paradoxes about receiving as a free gift and then having to inherit. As we have seen, one is a legal position, the other is a spiritual position. We are in a new creation. By far the greater measure of it is beyond; but we are moving on. Indeed, whenever we gather together in Conference, it is simply because we want to go on with the Lord, we want to pass from the one realm to the other, our hearts are set upon all the Lord has meant by bringing us into union with Himself. By His grace, we will go through and go on.

CHAPTER 05

Marital Union

3. Marital Union

"Or are ye ignorant, brethren (for I speak to men who know the law), how that the law hath dominion over a man for so long time as he liveth? For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7:1-4).

"For the husband is head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body... Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church; because we are members of his body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I speak in regard of Christ and of the Church" (Ephesians 5:23, 25-32).

"Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7).

"And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Revelation 21:9).

"Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me" (Hebrews 2:13).

Legal and Spiritual Union

I expect you have noticed that there are two aspects, offices, of this particular union with Christ, the marital union. There is that which is mentioned by Paul in the letter to the Romans, and there is that which is mentioned by him in the letter to the Ephesians and by John in the Revelation. One puts the marriage as having already taken place, and the other puts it in the future; and that looks difficult. How are you going to explain it?

Well, in exactly the same way as a number of other things are explained in the New Testament, a number of other things which seem to be a contradiction. There is the initial marriage of Romans, and the final marriage of Ephesians and Revelation, and the difference is that the initial is the legal and the final is the spiritual, and, as we were saying in an earlier study in this series, in various things in the New Testament we have both an initial and a final aspect. We were speaking then of sonship. We are sons, and yet we are to be sons; legally, we are already sons, but we are presently to become such spiritually, in the sense of possessing the inheritance. "If sons, then heirs": we are legally heirs by our new birth, but we are certainly not in possession of our inheritance, not enjoying all that is our heritage in Christ. It will take much more than this life, it will take all the ages to come, for us really to possess, appropriate and enjoy our inheritance.

Salvation is spoken of in this very way. We are saved, but we are yet to be saved, we shall be saved - it is put in the future. But it is just as definitely in the present - we are being saved. A lot of people have made a lot of trouble over that sort of thing, and have said that, because there is a future-tense reference to salvation in the New Testament, you can never know whether you are saved until you get to heaven. Well, we do not believe that, because it is not our experience. We know we are saved, but we also know that we are to be saved, and it does not mean that there is something that has come in between to make us unsaved: it simply points to this difference, that we see in so many connections, between our standing and our state, between the legal and the spiritual.

Later on, we shall be speaking about the House of God. Well, we are a spiritual house now. It is in present-tense terms. But we read - "whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6). Again it looks as though we are thrown back, we have to undo something; but it is not like that at all.

Now here it is perhaps more distinctly seen, in this matter of the marriage relationship between the Church and Christ. Paul says in the Roman letter that we are married to another, "even to him who was raised from the dead." Yet the marriage supper of the Lamb lies in the future. "Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:9). That lies in the future, and a special blessedness is attached to it.

You see, there is a provisional factor governing the intentions of God - a provisional factor as to the realization of the purposes of all the things that God has done and given and into which He has brought us. There is an "if" all the time, and that "if" does not relate to the

legal position at all. The Corinthians were all right as to the legal position of being in Christ. The first letter opens with the statement of that - "sanctified in Christ Jesus." They are all right as to their legal position; they can claim in Christ salvation. But it is not long before the Apostle in writing to them begins to speak to them about provisional things: this building upon the foundation, and all that is put on the foundation, and then it all going up in smoke, and believers just getting into heaven without anything else. It was all right legally there. If you like to stand upon the legal basis, you can get to heaven if you are in Christ. But there is so much more than that, and the so much more may just be missed.

Apply it if you like to this very relationship. There are many people legally married, and that is all there is to it; it ends there. They have certain rights and privileges because of the legal position, but who wants to stay there? Who will be satisfied with that? There is infinitely more in it than that, and that is what is here in the difference between the initial and the final, the legal and the spiritual. A very big difference indeed exists between those two. Or that difference may be graduated, as in the natural; the blessings of the relationship may be more or less. And that is how it is with Christians: they may be more or less in the blessings of this marriage relationship with the Lord.

Fellowship and Companionship

Let us try to sum this up in a few simple, and I think quite obvious, matters. Keeping to the illustration, or the type, the first marriage relationship of the first Adam; going back to look at that and look into it, and asking what were the Divine thoughts in it, we can transfer these thoughts to Christ and the Church, Christ and ourselves, in this most blessed of all the relationships - for indeed this is the most blessed of all the relationships with Christ. What was God's thought?

First of all, the Scripture indicates that He was prompted to bring about this union in the creating of the woman by the idea of companionship. "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). That is all. But there is a wealth in that. It almost seems presumption to transfer that to Christ and the Church, and yet there are so many more extra factors and features in the relationship of the Church to Christ, as His wife, that confirm and bear that out. This is not the only thing. The bride-types of the Old Testament are so rich and so full of confirmatory factors that you may transfer the thought to Christ and the Church. There is a whole wealth of evidence and proof that they did point on to Christ and the Church. We are not going to take up that study just now, but there it is. The proof is abundant, and therefore we may, presumptuous as it seems, transfer this very point to our relationship with our Lord: that the Church has been created by God because of this very prompting of interest in and desire for companionship for His Son.

If you look at the Lord Jesus in the days in which He was here, you cannot fail to see how He longed for fellowship. Perhaps one of the saddest words that ever came from Him was - "Ye... shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (John 16:32). But while that did not qualify His utterance or in any way make it a comparative thing, there was something of sadness about His word "I am alone." It is quite clear that He was always seeking companionship. He was a Man and He had the sense of this need of others, or another. It is a Divine thing. There is something about Christ which calls for fellowship - and it is a wonderful thing how the New Testament takes up that word "fellowship." What a rich word it is! I wish you would just get down to your concordance, which will give you this word "fellowship" in the original. You will find in that word alone a wealth of study and meditation, something very precious indeed. "Ye were called into the fellowship of his Son" (1 Cor. 1:9).

Well, that is, to begin with, the thought, the idea, of marital union: companionship or fellowship. Fellowship, in the first place, before companionship: just fellowship, that is all. The first note, the predominant note, in this relationship is simply fellowship.

What is fellowship? Well, fellowship is identity of life and purpose. Christ wanted those with Him in identity of life and identity of purpose, one heart with His heart; and you and I have been called into such a relationship. It is high, it is holy, it is precious that you and I should supply the Lord Jesus with a deep heart desire and longing for those who shall be in identification with His life and His purpose. That is all we will say for the moment, but that is the first step in the meaning of marital union.

Companionship seems to me to go just a little further even than that, or to add an extra feature - for companionship, while certainly including what we have just said about fellowship, is the mutual complement, where each one makes up what is lacking in the other, each one makes a contribution to the other and fulfills the other; and it seems very wonderful - for that word in Ephesians, "the fullness of him" (Eph. 1:22), is the "complement" of Him, the "making full" of Him, the "making complete" of Christ - it seems marvelous that the Church could give something to Christ to make Him complete. It sounds like heresy to say it, yet there it is. It is clearly stated that there is a heritage which He has in the Church. What is "his inheritance in the saints"? It is something that the Church has to give to Him. I am not stopping to say what that is. It is a statement of fact that the Lord sees the Church as able to give Him something, provide Him with something - an opportunity, an occasion, a vessel, a means, a way - something which otherwise He has not got but which He must have. Well, we are here on this earth to be for Christ what He needs here. And as for His giving us anything, that goes without saying.

So, then, companionship is a making good from one to the other, the filling up, the complement of each other. That is the marital relationship. This is the heavenly idea of marriage.

The Vindication of Christ by the Family

And then we find that, in the creation of this relationship at the beginning, it was that they together might be a vessel, one vessel, to contain the great trust of *LIFE*. It is not a mechanical thing and it is not just a doctrinal, ecclesiastical, formal or legal thing. It is a vital thing. That is, it is a matter of life. And so this life was to express itself and with them together, the deposit of this sacred trust of life. That Satan captured that trust, and has captured that trust ever since, is perhaps, the deepest tragedy and catastrophe in the whole history of the human race. Oh, today, the awful tragedy of propagation! That is a terrible story. The trust of life, the trust of transmitting that life, was a sacred and holy trust to be guarded solemnly for God - and Satan captured it.

Passing from the type to the antitype, you see this trust is between Christ and His Church as the Bridegroom and the bride, as the Husband and the wife, this wonderful trust of spiritual propagation, spiritual increase. Where there are no souls being born something has gone wrong. The whole Divine idea has broken down, and where there is no concern and desire about it, something has gone wrong. Need I say anymore? We are brought by our marriage relationship to Christ into a most solemn and sacred trust of being the vehicle by which He shall see His seed and be satisfied. He is vindicated in His family. His life is vindicated. In Isaiah 53 you notice that His being cut off from the earth, having His name cut off, having His being cut off, the whole story of the determination to bring an end to Him, and of the effort of Satan to cut off His seed, is written there; but then the statement is, "he shall see his seed." Good Friday is past and Easter Day is here - and He shall see His seed. Blessed be God, He can already see it in the earth in some measure. It will be "a great multitude which no man can number," no man *CAN* number. Men can count pretty high; but they shall not be able to number His seed. It will be as the stars of the heaven, as the sand of the seashore. He is vindicated by His seed; Christ is vindicated by the salvation of souls. Christ is vindicated by the Church being the vessel and the instrument of His self-realization in that way. Did you notice how the statement in Romans 7 finished? "Joined to another... that we might bring forth fruit unto God."

The Ultimate Spiritual Union

With one very brief return to the point with which we started, we will close. Here is the legal, and here is how the legal ought to work out to the spiritual - to the spiritual union which is ultimate. The end of this thing is seen in the marriage supper of the Lamb. This means that the legal union has been fulfilled to the utmost, that these two are not only in this legal relationship as husband and wife, legally married and that is all there is to it. They

are now more and more and ever more being married, if we may put it that way; they are growing into one another. The fellowship is dependent, the mutual contribution is increasing. One is becoming ever more to the other and the other to the one, and at last there is this bridal company "following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," without a demur, without a question, without any rebellion, without any insubordination. The thing is to be eventually a spiritual fullness of oneness. That, of course, is how earthly married life ought to be if it is after the heavenly pattern - just a growing into each other, becoming incapable of getting on without each other, until at last there is such a merging that nothing whatever of difference or distance remains; it is complete unity.

That is the marriage supper, I think. "His wife hath made herself ready": that is, something has happened that has got rid of the final disparity. There is still a lot of disparity between us and our Lord, a lot of unsubmitiveness even now, a lot to be overcome in us even as His Church, His wife, a lot to be done in us; but we seek that that shall be accomplished. We yield and we want to yield, and we want to come to the place where there is no more question at all: where it is utter, unquestioning yieldedness to Him Who has not only captured but captivated us completely; and that is the marriage supper of the Lamb, as I understand it. It is a spiritual thing - the consummation of a legal relationship.

CHAPTER 06

Vocational Union

4. Vocational Union

"I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18).

"Christ was faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if we hold fast our confidence firm unto the end" (Hebrews 2:6, R.S.V. margin).

"Christ Jesus... in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:20-22).

"Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5).

I trust that you are seeing in these various aspects of union with Christ a particular value and meaning and conception bound up with each one. If you have not quite clearly and definitely grasped that, will you please go back again and start at the beginning, not just accepting that these are forms of union with Christ, that there is eternal union and there is creational union and there is marital union, but fasten upon the particular meaning and idea of each one, and, if you can, put a single word against each, a word of your own choosing.

The word which stands against this fourth aspect is vocation, for the house of God is constituted for a specific purpose for which a house exists. Before we can go any further, we must just stop with that word "house." "Whose house are we." It is a very interesting and a very full word. When we use the word "house," at any rate in English, our minds have a very limited conception. In the original word, all the ideas of a dwelling, a household, an arrangement, the furnishings and the stewardship are found, and it is those various meanings, like the facets of a jewel, that we are now going to consider briefly. But remember that the governing thing is union with *CHRIST* in this sense, union with Christ as a house.

(a) A Building

The first meaning of the original word is a building. *"I will build my church."* *"Every house is builded by someone; but he that built all things is God" (Heb. 3:4).* The house is a building. This building is that which corresponds to Christ Himself. He said, as He looked at the House, the stone house, the great temporal building, and immediately transferred its spiritual

significance to Himself, to His own body - *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). "I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."* All the destructive arts of hell will not be able to prevail against that which He builds, His building: a building, not now of stone, but of living stones. That is Peter's word about this house - "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house."

This house, which "house are we," has as its governing object and vocation the making of God Himself present and available to men. That is the first idea. The building is for a habitation of God, "a habitation of God in the Spirit" a habitation of *GOD*, in the person of the Holy Spirit, so that God becomes present and available. That is a statement. It could remain just a statement of truth, but things ought not to remain merely as such. It is the setting forth of a test, the test as to whether the house of God exists, and the test as to the existence of the house of God, or of living stones comprising the house of God, is first of all whether God is present or not. Is God known to be there? That is the test of everything so far as the house is concerned, for that is its vocation. It has no meaning apart from that.

In the Old Testament there was a time when the glory went up from the sanctuary: it went up from the place where God had been; and, although the thing continued, the fabric went on, it was a shell - it had no significance, no value, no meaning at all, or, if it had any meaning, it had the meaning of tragedy. The glory had gone up, removed; God was no longer to be found there. So, quite simply, the test of the existence of the house of God and of living stones is just that. Is the Lord found in us, and is the Lord found in the midst of us? If He is, that just satisfies all His requirements. He does not want the elaborate and the ornate structure. *"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).* That is the house of God. The house of God is determined, not by a name, a title, a designation, a place, a thing. It is determined by the presence of the Lord, and anywhere, amongst any two or three, no matter where that may be or who they may be, if God is found there, that is the house of God, and that is all God wants.

The trouble with people is that they must have something over and around it, a building to meet in and call the "church." How often the glory has departed immediately something like that has happened; something has gone. Begin to arrange this thing, begin to set up an order of things, and where has the Lord gone? That is what you come to so often. The Lord simply says, Give Me living stones together, and that is all I want. Do not try to improve on that. You can gather more living stones: that is the way but that is all I want - living stones together in an inward "togetherness"; firstly because it is union with Christ, Christ united, Christ in His oneness. The Lord says, Give Me that, and I will make My presence very real.

And then of course the object is not that that should exist merely as something enjoying the Lord's presence. So often that is where a mistake is made. "Yes, we are having a lovely time with the Lord, we few, this little group, we are having a lovely time with the Lord" - and you think that you can perpetuate that indefinitely. You cannot. It is not only for the presence of

the Lord: it is to make the Lord available to others, that they may know where to find the Lord - nay more, that they shall know that the Lord *CAN BE FOUND*. It is to provide the answer to their question, "Will God indeed dwell with men?" Yes, here He is. The presence of the Lord is the answer to men's hearts, to men's quests, and that is enough. When the Holy Spirit came to the Church on the day of Pentecost, "the multitude came together," and that is what happened - God was made available. What is needed is a few living stones, not to discuss doctrine, theology, the technicalities of Church order or anything like that, but to speak of the Lord, to be occupied with the Lord. If the Lord is not enough to occupy us for all our days here, there is something wrong with us. If you peter out - with apologies to Peter! - when you begin to talk about the Lord, and then have to fill up the conversation with all sorts of other things, there is something seriously wrong.

God's eternal desire has been to have a dwelling and to dwell with men. So the Bible reveals. A marvelous thing! It was the thing which astounded Solomon. "Will God in very deed dwell on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee" (1 Kings 8:27) - "and yet He has commanded me to build Him a house!" God wanting to dwell with men. That is the very first thing about a house - that it should be a place of *RESIDENCE*. Union with Christ, you see, means bringing God in: for where Christ is corporately expressed and personally present, there God comes in. Do remember that. If you want to know God's presence, be occupied with His Son, for, as we said in an earlier meditation, God's appointments are with His Son.

(b) A Household

The second phase of this wonderful word "house" is union with Christ as a household. That is a slight enlargement of the conception. You will understand what I mean, or what that means, if I remind you that in the Old Testament you have such phrases as "the house of Jacob" or "the house of Israel," or, in the New Testament, "the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). In Germany you had the House of Hanover; in England you have the House of Windsor.

A household denotes two things - a single progenitor and a family name. For example, the house of Jacob - Jacob was the progenitor, and the house takes his name; or the house of Israel - one man gave his name to a whole line, the house of Israel. And then consider the household of faith. This household of faith - we know who the progenitor is. "I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20), said the Apostle. We are of those who are of the faith. It is the collective thoughts of one household, and brings in immediately the conception of the Church as a family, Father, Son and children.

Now here I want to say something which is to most of you by no means new, but which is of very great importance. We must not take these things as abstract truths and ideas. We can, of course, have all the teaching on the house of God; we can know what the Bible says about the house of God and get the whole technical conception - and yet it can mean nothing of practical value. This house of God must be expressed locally; it must be found in existence locally. What we are going to say in this connection shortly, under another phase, makes it quite clear that this thing must be in *EXISTENCE* in order to satisfy God's requirements. There must actually and literally be, in locations, that which corresponds to the union of living stones - be it even so few as two, the irreducible minimum - to provide God with this.

But it is not, let me say it again, an ecclesiastical building called the house of God. Our Christian mentality is all astray. There are people, who really ought to know better - for they are under the sound of the teaching all the time - who, when they come into gatherings, still say, in prayer or in worship, that they are glad to have come to the house of the Lord, meaning that they have come to a *PLACE*. They do not mean that they are glad to have come into the presence of the Lord's people - though of course that may incidentally be true. The house, for them, is still this other idea of some place, of something external. But that is not it. It is not an ecclesiastical thing - to say nothing about architecture. It is not any particular place or any particular form. We can kill the house of God by starting with its technique - demanding the technique of the house of God. Whatever comes along that line must come organically and spontaneously, as we shall see at another time. We do not begin by constituting something according to a form. We are present together in a place, a location, as living stones, livingly expressing this house of God and fulfilling its vocation, bringing God into that area, making God available. Perhaps that will be better borne out as we go on.

Well, this family conception, this household idea, speaks, firstly, of purity of strain or pedigree. You remember that in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah a very severe test was applied to everyone who had any place at all in recovering and reconstituting the house of God. He had to show his pedigree, because there were a lot of people who wanted to have "a finger in the pie," who wanted to come into that thing and have a place there, and because a lot of people had come in and there had been a mixture of seed, everyone must now show his pedigree. "Now, then, your birth certificate, please; where were you born, when were you born, what is your parentage, how far back does it go?" If I asked you this, what would you say? When were you born?

Now, perhaps you do not have to be able to say the precise day, hour, moment, when it happened, but you must at least be able to say, Yes, I know that at a certain time in my life something happened, and that happening was nothing less than a new birth. You must be able to do that to be in the household. And what is your parentage? Where were you born?

Now you would be quite wrong if you said, I was born again at such-and-such a place. The only answer is, I was born in heaven, from above; my citizenship is in heaven, my franchise is in the city of God. "This one was born there" (Psalm 87). "All my fountains are in thee" - I take my rise and my support from up there, the heavenly city. Where were you born, and how far back does your pedigree go? Ah, blessed be God, it goes back beyond time, altogether outside of time. In Christ, we are not children of Adam; we are children of eternity. We are chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.

So this household must imply absolute purity of strain, of pedigree; there must be no mixture here.

Then it speaks of filial relationship, The household of God is a family which is a family bound together by filial relationship. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 2:14). The filial relationship and our birth are linked together. You cannot prove your birth if you do not love the brethren - the brotherhood, the family. You cannot prove your birth if that is not true. The proof of our birth is our mutual love one for another.

And then as a household it speaks of loyalty and jealousy for the Name. How the house of God is spoiled, how the household is marred, by our lack of loyalty. We may not think it is lack of loyalty to our Lord - we do not mean it like that - but we all bear His Name, and lack of loyalty to the Name is found in our lack of loyalty to one another. Is it not a terrible tragedy that Christians, whether individuals or companies, find it so easy to criticize one another? There is a loyalty in the world that is very often better than the loyalty between Christians. Think of the loyalty of the professions - you never hear one doctor speaking to the detriment of another doctor. There is a covenant of honor, there is a standard of loyalty, and there is always an extenuating, an excusing, not only there but in other realms also. But here, sadly, amongst us, we do not so easily try to excuse, to cover a multitude of sins, to let what is good be the object of our attention more than what is bad. That is a contradiction of the household.

And it is very practical. If that is a true conception of God's presence, God being available, then it requires a very practical outworking in our relationships. The house requires the household, the larger conception of the family, of the pure strain of heavenly life that is above this earth.

(c) A Temple

Again, union with Christ is a temple. Perhaps you might think that that has been covered when we say that God is present and God is available. These are not watertight

compartment ideas of union with Christ. They are all parts of a whole, the house of God. The temple simply brings out one particular idea. You see, it is not only where God is. God is in His holy temple, but that temple idea is that it is there that God's rights are recognized and where God gets His rights, because that is just the meaning of worship. The temple is the place of worship, and worship is just giving God His rights. God's rights are absolute, and in His temple God gets everything - all is unto God. In the day when the temple was not what God meant it to be, as a figure very much otherwise, indeed - Isaiah wrote, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1). It is the place where there is no room for anyone else. You know the story of Uzziah - how he entered the temple to burn incense, unlawfully, without right he forced his way in and touched the altar, and he was smitten with leprosy and died in a leper-house. In other words, he got into God's place. And then, when Uzziah was out of the way, Isaiah saw the Lord filling the temple. That is the true idea of the temple, and there it is "Holy, holy, holy," as we shall see. The thought behind the temple, then, is - Here, amongst these people here, in the two or the three or in the greater companies locally found, God is getting everything. God has a full, free, unhindered, unreserved way; His rights of complete capitulation, surrender, yieldedness, obedience, are ceded to Him. And it is not just in lip, it is in life. That is the temple, a living temple, a spiritual house. God's rights are ceded to Him.

(d) A Stewardship: (e) An Order

And then, finally, we come to union with Christ as a stewardship and an order. The word translated "stewardship," strangely enough, is from the same root as the Greek word for "house": it means the management of a house or household, and gives us our word "economy." It is the word that is elsewhere translated "dispensation" - what we call an economy, or administration; that is, an order of things - the order which exists in a certain place at a certain time. It has two aspects: one is that it represents and expresses this Divine, heavenly, order; the other, that it is an administrative place, a place of administration, or ministry. That is the double idea of stewardship.

I was saying a little while back that it is foolish to think of a heavenly order being found without some company to express it. There must be that here and there in the earth which *EXPRESSES* this order, in which this order is seen. Now, I am not contradicting myself in saying again that *you must introduce the New Testament system*. It just depends on how it comes in, but it must be there. It must be a heavenly order expressed. But it is possible to have the order without the doctrine, and it is better so than to have the doctrine without the order. We have found that the very thing is there, in existence, and people do not know anything about it. There it is: it exists - a wonderful spiritual order. They have sensed that this is how the Lord would have things done. When it has been pointed out to them that

there is a whole revelation from God on that very matter, they had never realized it, but there it is. They have come under the regime of the Holy Spirit, and found that this is how the Lord does things, this is what the Lord would have; it is spontaneous.

So we do not begin by saying, "Now, to have an expression of the heavenly order, you must first bring a company of people together, and then you must have the Lord's Table and baptism, and you must have brethren in authority and corporate ministry - everything must be corporate and in fellowship." Do not have that kind of mentality. It is deadly; it can be as earthly as anything else. You will find, if the Holy Spirit really gets things into His hands, that you will begin to be exercised about things. We have seen that happening so wonderfully. Where Christ is preached, with a seeking of complete and utter surrender and abandonment to Him and the establishment of His lordship and headship; when all those things are brought into view and have been accepted, it is not long before people say, "I am beginning to be exercised about so-and-so; you have never said anything about this, but it has been coming up with me lately."

That is the way, and the only way, that is fruitful and valuable. The Holy Spirit precipitates things when He gets His place. He brings the house, He brings the stewardship, the dispensation, the economy, the heavenly order, and when it comes up like that, it is a very blessed thing, and you say, "This is not some system of teaching I have taken on; it is something the Lord has shown me." That is the way, and the only living way. If you walk in the Spirit, if you really walk in the Spirit, you will find that, as you go on, all sorts of adjustments will be made because the Lord indicates them to you; all sorts of things will be put away or be brought in, because the Lord is speaking. He is a Son over God's house, and as such He is bringing in this heavenly economy, this heavenly order; not to have ordinances, but testimonies - those things which embody spiritual and heavenly principles.

Well, that is familiar ground to many, but to all who read these lines it may not be equally so, and it may be the Lord would have that word said. Yes, union with Christ as a stewardship: there is an arrangement that the Holy Spirit will make in the house of God, that Christ as the Son over God's house will bring into being; a heavenly arrangement. It means a new mentality - "stewards of the mysteries of God" said Paul (1 Cor. 4:1) - a new mentality, a new conception of things; or, as Peter said, "According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10). In "housekeepers of the manifold grace of God." If you think that is straining the sense, look at the context. "Using hospitality one to another" - that immediately precedes it. "According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good 'housekeepers' of the manifold grace of God."

It means a new mentality bringing heavenly conceptions; heavenly-mindedness. It says that Adam gave names to everything - I suppose the animals and the flowers. (I am quite sure he did not give Latin names: none of that in Paradise, please!) He gave names to everything.

My point is this. We have to find a heavenly name for everything, find out what the Lord calls things. The Lord calls a thing by a certain name. We go round it and call it by other names, but the Lord says, No, that is that, it is this; you are calling it by another name. We have to call things by their right names, give the right heavenly name to things. The Lord calls a certain virtue meekness; we call it weakness. Give the right heavenly names to things and you will have plenty to do - it is a very big world.

The other aspect is administration or ministry: the house as a stewardship, a ministry, a place of ministry. That does not mean, of course, setting up a professional ministry or a particular company called ministers. It is the household; that is the place of ministry. Everybody in this household ought to have a stewardship; everyone ought to be a steward of the manifold grace of God. In some way or other you can be a steward, because you are *CALLED* to be a steward, to have something of the Lord to give. That is why the Lord is dealing with you as He is. He is trying to make you a steward in His house, to make it possible for you to have something to give to someone else, something of Himself that you have received, that you have come to possess that you can pass on to someone else.

Well, all this is compassed by the word for house, and its related forms, all referring to *the house of God*. This house is a wonderful thing. Do ask the Lord to make more clear to you what it involves, and let us ask the Lord very much that there may be literal expressions of His heavenly house found more and more widely on this earth.

CHAPTER 07

Functional Union

5. Functional Union

"For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another" (Rom. 12:4,5).

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now they are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary: and those parts of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness; whereas our comely parts have no need: but God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffereth all the members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof" (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

"...His body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:23).

"That he... might reconcile them both in one body unto God" (Ephesians 2:15,16).

"...For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

"Christ... from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth... maketh... increase" (Ephesians 4:15,16).

"He is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18).

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body" (Ephesians 5:23).

"We are members of his body" (Ephesians 5:30).

We continue with our consideration of this great and many-sided revelation of union with Christ. We come now to the fifth aspect of union with Christ, which we are calling Functional Union: that is, as a body, with head and members.

Inclusive Function: Expressing the Personality - Christ

I am going to begin with the inclusive function of the Body of Christ. That function is the *expressing of the personality* of the Body, which is Christ. The Body of Christ, the Church as the Body of Christ, does not exist for self-expression. It does not exist for any other purpose at all than that of expressing the inward personality, the personality dwelling within the Body, that is, Christ. We never rightly speak of a corpse as a man. We can speak of it as the body of a man, but never as a man. The man is not there. His body may be there. We may, on the other hand, speak of a living body as a man, but we know quite well that the body, even though it is animated, is not the man, or is at most only a small part of him. The body is only the vehicle or vessel for the expression and activity of the man. The real man is what is inside the body.

So it is with the Body of Christ. We discriminate between Himself and His Body and yet we identify them: that is, we identify Him with His Body, and in a sense we identify His Body with Him, and yet there remains that difference. It is important to keep this in mind. Christ is not merged into something called His Body and His own personality lost. He remains the personality of His Body. There may be the framework without the personality, just as there can be the personality without the Body; but - and this is the teaching concerning the Church as His Body - for all practical purposes the two are one. That is, Christ demands His Body, and the Body demands Him. The Body is dominated by Him in order that, according to one passage we have just read, it may be His completeness, "the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

So, then, the Body has as its function two main things. One is to *LOCATE* the person or the personality, to bring Christ where the Body is, so that, where the Body is, there Christ should be. He has decided and chosen so to bind Himself up with His Body, that that Body, the Church, should be the place where He is found; that, in the minimum of representation - two members - it should bring Him into any place, that by it He should be able to come into any location or situation. One purpose of the Body, then, is to locate Christ.

Secondly, its function is to express the personality, to be the means, the vessel, wherein and whereby He can express Himself, make Himself known - bring people to see the Lord, to know the Lord, to understand the Lord. That is quite simple, but it is quite challenging.

There are several matters connected with this. Let us look in the first place at some things of relative or secondary account. It is possible to exaggerate the Body. That is sometimes done in the physical, human realm! Such an assertiveness, such an elaboration, such an aggrandizement, such an adornment and decoration of the external, the body, the fabric - to the hiding of the personality - so that the thing which impresses is the form, the pageantry, the external, not the presence of the Lord. It is that which touches the senses of men, so that their sight is taken up and their human natural senses of perception are occupied with the externals of the Church and often with the people themselves making an impression, and the Lord Himself is not to be found. It is possible to exaggerate the body; and apart from that - possibly exaggerated - observation, in many other ways we can bring the *TECHNIQUE* of the Church, of the Body of Christ, how it must be done and so on, so much into view, that all this is occupying the attention instead of the Lord Himself. The very teaching can obscure, if we are not very careful. Unless the Lord, the personality within, transcends all the means employed, then there is something wrong and we had better reconsider our means.

In the next place, it is possible to make the body *ARTIFICIAL* - now I am on very thin ice! - by titivating and decorating and painting. And what is it all about? It is an attempt to create personality where it is felt to be lacking. Forgive me if this makes any reader feel uncomfortable! But that is its underlying object - to make an impression, to carry weight, to give a sense of personality, or to make up some conscious lack. It is possible to be so occupied with this elaboration in connection with the Church in order to make an impression. How much of it, indeed, is already being done by the organized Church, with this object in view. All sorts of things are being put on, taken on, employed, all the paint and gilt and tinsel, all the artificial, in order to try to overcome this sense of a lack of impact, in order to make an impression because the impression is not there naturally; and it is quite possible to make the Body of Christ artificial, and its registration an artificial one, which will wear off unless you put more paint on and still more. You have to keep it going or it will fade out. It has to be done every morning!

On the other hand, it is possible to underestimate and be careless about the body, and that is equally evil. To be careless, slovenly, shabby in your bodily presence dishonors the personality, it takes something from the man, it degrades him. That could be applied in many ways. We make the observation as we go on that we must honor the Body of Christ. We are under obligation to keep the Body in respect for the sake of the One who is inside. While I speak, of course, of the fellowship of the Lord's people - the mutual honoring and respecting and helping and trying to elevate the standard of spiritual life; keeping things

from becoming spiritually shabby and threadbare and down at heel, it does have - and forgive the somewhat mundane application - it does have an application to our personal presence, as to whether we, as Christians, in our personal appearance are really discrediting our Lord, by carelessness in habits or in dress, in behavior or manners. These things let the Lord down. As Christians we ought to be far above them. Now I am not suggesting to you that you at once go and begin to elaborate your personal adornments, but I do say that Christ deserves to be honored by the body and in the body, and it is possible to sin against Christ by carelessness with regard to the body. I would like to follow that more closely in our mutual care of one another - what the Word calls "provoking one another to good works," and "washing one another's feet"; that is, helping one another to keep from the earth, to keep out of touch with the low level of this world.

Functional Relatedness

We turn now to look at some things of primary account. The things that we have just been considering are perhaps only relatively important but there are also the greater things, the things of primary account for the full expression of the personality. I am using that word deliberately, for the time being, instead of Christ, because you will get the point better, I think, if I do so. For the full expression of the personality, which is Christ, there must be first of all a body, and a body, as we have read in 1 Cor. 12, is not so many individual scattered members. The body is not so many disconnected or unconnected members. The Body of Christ is the fellowship of believers, in the Holy Spirit, in a very definite, conscious relatedness, involving an inward registration and recognition that we are related to all the Lord's people, that locality in this matter is not the final criterion, that we are related to the Lord's people everywhere. That is, indeed, most definitely emphasized in the New Testament as an absolute necessity for the full expression of Christ. The full expression of Christ cannot come through unrelated individual believers. There may be some small, some partial expression of Christ in such, but fullness requires relatedness, and I challenge you on this matter. It is open to proof and it is constantly demonstrated. Your measure of Christ depends upon your relatedness. You will never get beyond a certain small degree of the expression of Christ in isolation, in separation, in independence, in apartness. The increase of your measure of the expression of Christ demands that you are in vital union with other members of His Body. I cannot be too emphatic about that, because I see everywhere the spiritual limitations and even the spiritual ravages resulting from the loss of that great reality. The Body must exist; there must be relatedness. And not just as an abstract thing; it must be real, it must be conscious, it must be deliberate, it must be a part of the very life. We know it - and if we do not know it, Satan knows it - but the Lord knows it.

Interrelatedness

And then there must be interrelatedness. Interrelatedness is essential to the full expression of this union, this fellowship, this relatedness; there must be a working together, there must be a mutual consideration with a view to helping one another, definitely helping one another. We are members not only of Christ - we have read that twice already - but "severally one of another." That is interrelatedness, and it is the very practical aspect of the Body of Christ that there is mutual support and mutual helpfulness, and that we are really laying ourselves out for the good of other members of the Body of Christ. That is the only way of the fullness of His expression. I said this is subject to test, to proof. You will find that your measure of Christ increases when you go to help another member of Christ; when you consider the need of other members of the Body and do what you can to meet it, Christ is coming out in fuller expression in your own life. If you are wrapped up in yourself, circling around yourself, occupied with yourself, nursing your own grievances and sufferings and trials and difficulties, and so becoming more and more isolated and imprisoned within yourself, your measure of Christ is diminishing all the time. It is that outward movement to His own that means spiritual increase to the one who makes it. It is necessary, it is essential, for the full expression of the personality. The New Testament is largely constructed upon that truth.

Interdependence

And in the next place, interdependence. It is only another phase of the same thing. This brings in a general spirit of meekness. One member cannot say to another, "I have no need of you." It is not, perhaps, likely that you would say that in so many words. It may have been said in Corinth. It does seem as though something like that was going on there, and those actual words may have been used by some about others. "We can do without you!" "You do not count!" But it is not likely that spiritual people would use those actual phrases. Yet we act them. We behave like that too often. It is one of the lessons that we have got to learn. We really must consider this matter - that somehow or other the members which are least honorable are necessary. Somehow or other, those whom we would discount are necessary. It may be difficult sometimes to see how they are necessary. At any rate, it is to be an attitude. Can the Lord do without that one? Does not all the grace of God in salvation and in glorification come down to that least one? And am I not the least one, after all? Do we feel we are more important than others, and that we therefore merit the grace of God more than some others do? You see, the whole question of meekness arises. Interdependence means that somehow we need one another. That is true, and that is a necessary basis for the full expression of Christ - mutual recognition, mutual honoring; so that we take the attitude, "Now, this child of God, with all the faults and weaknesses, cannot be despised, cannot be cut off as of no account. Somewhere they fit into the whole in the realm of the

Spirit, and the measure of Christ is increased." In that way we try to make the most of the least. There must be an acceptance of the fact of the Body.

Functional Constitution and Appointment

Then we must accept, definitely accept, the fact of the constitutional function of each member: that is, that each member, if really a member of Christ - and so possessing the indwelling Holy Spirit - each member, by the Holy Spirit, is in some way constituted with a function. Now, we must take that to ourselves. You may feel that you have not any place or function; you have always been trying to find out what it is, but you have never discovered it. How many people have come to me and said something like this - "Do you really believe that I represent some function in the Body of Christ? I wish you would tell me what it is!" I will answer that in another way. I am saying that we must accept the fact as stated in the Word of God, that, if this is not just some picture, some illustration, this figure of the body; if it is a reality, if the body is more than a metaphor, if it is a living reality and the Church is constituted on the very principles of the physical body of a man, as undoubtedly it is, if that is true, then these facts hold good, they are facts and we have got to accept the facts.

Now you can theorize about the functions of your body, if you like, but you will sooner or later have to accept the facts of it: they are facts. And so are these things that I am mentioning. We have to accept the fact that as members of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we are constituted with a function in the Body of Christ and we have got to function. We have to recognize that we are there to function, not to be parasites or passengers, but to fulfil vital functions in the Body of Christ. If we accept the fact, and adjust ourselves to the fact, the Holy Spirit can do things; but if we become passive, if we sit down and decide that we do not count for anything and therefore what is the good of it - today we are eggs, tomorrow we are feather-dusters! - if we adopt that kind of attitude, the Holy Spirit will not do anything. The Holy Spirit says, Now then, on your feet and give Me an opportunity; take a positive attitude toward this reality, this truth, that you are a member of Christ's Body and that He has no paralyzed members.

That means, of course, more than the acceptance of the fact of our position in the Body and of our having a function in the Body. It means the acceptance of our *RESPONSIBILITY*, that we regard ourselves as responsible people in the Body of Christ, that we take responsibility for the expression of Christ - not personal importance, assertiveness, self-realization, but the expression of Christ. I am here as a member of a Body, the function of which is to express the indwelling personality, which is Christ. That is a serious responsibility, a solemn charge and obligation, as well as a privilege. We must take this up. Why am I joined to Christ? Why am I a member of Christ's Body? For such I am if I am in Christ. Why am I in that position? For no other and no lesser purpose than to be the vehicle of the expression of

Christ, and if I am not doing that I am contradicting the very meaning of my union with Christ. We have to take responsibility over it. Every day we have to feel responsible about this matter of the expression of Christ. Of course, that will come down to many things. We slip up, we make mistakes; we speak a wrong thing, or a right thing in a wrong way; somehow or other we default; and at once we say, "That is not Christ, I must put that right; that has made a false impression, that has dishonored my Lord, let me clear that up." That is taking responsibility. There will be many small things like that - though nothing is truly small in the Body of Christ; and we could speak of many other things.

Unconscious Functioning a Sign of Health

Now in a healthy body all this exists very largely unconsciously. Coming back to what I said, asking, What is my function? - your trouble will be that you will not know. In a healthy body, everything happens without your being conscious of it. You do not mentally reason out, work out and think and decide when you are going to take the next breath. You just do it. You never thought anything about it. That is going on in your body if you are healthy. It is all functioning so largely unconsciously. There is an unconscious sense in our physical system. It registers before we register. When we are pulled up by some symptom, some feeling, we begin to realize that something has gone wrong physically. But the system registered that before we were conscious of it. It is only bringing us to recognize what it has already recognized. That is going on all the time. In a healthy body there is no self-occupation with - What am I, who am I, where am I, what is my function? And when the Body of Christ is healthy, there is a spontaneous expression of Christ. It just happens, and it is most healthy when it is like that - indeed it is only healthy when it is like that. When people are self-conscious, when people are letting you know that they are trying to do something for the Lord - there is something wrong there. That is the Body occupied with itself instead of with the Lord. If we are really occupied with the Lord, a very great deal of this self-occupation disappears. Do not worry as to what your function is. You live in union with the Lord and you will function. You may not be able to see what it is that represents your value, but it will be there; you may not be able to see how it is that you are serving the purpose of the Body, but it will be served. Is it not true that we have known those who have felt themselves the poorest, the weakest, the most foolish, and we have found a fragrance of Christ, a beautiful fragrance of Christ, in that life, and they were all the time so troubled because they did not feel they were any good at all? We have met Christ. It is quite a healthy state to be in - far better than the opposite. There is an unconscious registration going on.

And when there is this unconscious registration, if anything does go wrong, what has been registered in the spirit within begins to make itself felt outwardly, and we become aware of the symptoms. We know there is something wrong. It has come up somewhere from the depths; something is not right. What I am saying is that there is a fact of things before there

is an understanding of things. Before there is a mental apprehension, there is a fact, the fact of function before we understand. We said in an earlier chapter in this series that sometimes there can be a true living, beautiful expression of the real meaning of the Body of Christ without any of the teaching or the technique. That does not mean that teaching becomes unnecessary; but the right order is that the thing should be there first, and that you should come to something more by understanding what is there: whereas if you put it the other way and get all the teaching and technique and then try to get reality, it does not work - it is the wrong way round.

Christ's Headship

I am going to close with this, the key to all - and there is a great deal more than I have said: you know how much we could say about the Body of Christ and its function, it is just full of wonderful Divine meaning - but the key to all is Christ's Headship expressed in every member, in every part. There is a sense in which our heads, physically, naturally can be said to be present in every part of a healthy body. You can take the finest point and touch any part of the body to the farthest extremity - and how do you sense it? you know it in your head, you register it there. In a healthy body, the head, if it is free to function and is really functioning, is in touch with, and as it were represented in, every part. In the same way the Headship of Christ - His absolute Headship, Lordship, sovereignty, call it what you will - being expressed in any and every part of the Body and in every function, is the key to everything.

This means, of course, simply that every one of us, howsoever many we be, must be immediately and utterly under the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ if the foregoing is to be true. The expression of Christ demands the Lordship of Christ, the manifestation of Christ demands that He have His place as Head in every part.

Now do take that as the sum of everything; but do remember, do believe it - for you are going to prove it - you are going out or you are going on, you are going down or you are going up; we are all either going to make spiritual progress or we are going to retrogress. There is no standing still in this. We are on a slippery slope, and the only way is to keep going up or else we shall go down, and it is going to be like that all the way. Have no mistake about it. We are not just going to be stationary. If we do not go on we are going to lose ground. It is a fact which is borne out by the experience of every one of us, that we just *CANNOT* cease to be positive. It is a most perilous thing to cease to be positive in the Christian life. Lack of fervency of spirit uncovers us, it takes our defenses away, and we shall be steadily undone, steadily disintegrated, steadily made to lose out. This matter of the Body of Christ as a living organism, with relatedness and interrelatedness and interdependence, is no theory or technique. These are vital relationships connected with

the increase of spiritual life, the enlargement of the expression of Christ, the justification of our very existence. But they are necessary things. You let your fellowship with the Lord's people suffer and you let your own spiritual life suffer. If you in any way become detached and isolated in spirit, in mind, in action, you cut the very vitals of your own spiritual life. It is like that. This functional union with Christ in His Body is essential. It is essential to Him, for the fulfillment of His purpose. It is essential to us in the fulfillment of our very life as Christians.

CHAPTER 08

Vital and Organic Union

6. Vital and Organic Union

"Every one... that doeth righteousness is begotten of him" (1 John 2:29).

"...Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (1 John 1:13).

"Of his own will he brought us forth [begat he us, A.V.] by the word of truth" (James 1:18).

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

And of course the whole of John 15 should be placed there. *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me..."* and so on.

"As newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" (1 Peter 2:2).

"...But speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

There will be no new profundities of truth delved into in what follows, and to many it will perhaps seem like coming back to the most elementary things, the very beginnings, of the Christian life, but I feel that it is very necessary for us to take nothing for granted. We who may know these things, and may have known them for a long time, will be the better for constant refresher courses in such matters, to help us to remember these basic truths and basic laws of our life and growth. There being such a large proportion of younger people among our readers, who are undoubtedly seeking the way of the quickest entrance into spiritual fullness, who are concerned to get on in the spiritual life just as quickly as possible, I think this word may prove helpful to them. At least it will be a re-emphasis upon things which it is so necessary always to keep in mind.

The Seed-Principle

Now the principle of being and growing is life. The means and method of being and growing is a seed, with life in it, in which the whole organism of its kind exists. That is, indeed, the principle upon which God has constructed the greater part of his animate creation. It is not

a machine - it is an organism. It is not made to run and go by artificial means or external energies. Of course, it requires food from outside, but it must have life in order to feed. It is sustained by life in itself. The seed of every species has, within itself, all that characterizes the particular organism. The particular nature of that species, its shape, its size, its color, its form, its features, its capacities, are all there in the seed where the life is. Of course, that is the wonder of nature. It is an amazing thing: just a seed with its tiny germ of life in it, and then, when grown, developed and in full expression, coming true to type in all its features. It is a marvelous thing. That is God's method of being and growing. It is all there.

(a) Begetting

We have read passages in which the word "begotten" is used concerning certain people, a certain type of creation, "begotten of God." The seed, the fertilizing principle, is the Word of God, and the life is the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of life. Within the Word of God - of course specifically within the Word of truth in the Scriptures, but in anything that God says, that really comes from God to us - there are contained all the wonderful possibilities, potentialities, of what is of God, of what is like God, of God's nature, of God's mind, of God's features, of all the dimensions to which God would bring a life; the very shape of the life which God would produce. It is all there when God speaks. When God says something, and His Word falls into suitable ground and has that corresponding answer of fertilizing faith, it is all potentially there. (You will remember that it was said of some that the Word spoken profited them nothing, not being mingled with faith in them that heard it (Heb. 4:2), so that there was no begetting. There are always two sides to this matter, but we are not going to be too detailed and analytical. Some things will have to be taken for granted.) But when God says something and sees in us a response, an answer back to God, all that wonderful fullness of Divine meaning, intention, possibility, kind, order, shape, size and everything else, is there in what God has said. Something has happened and wonderful possibilities exist. It is possible, of course, for God to come with His Word, with all the mighty potentialities of begetting, and for nothing to happen because of our attitude, but, given the response, given the counterpart of faith, and anything within the compass of Divine intention and conception is possible.

Now I am stressing this very much because I feel that we have become too familiar with hearing the truth of God. So often nothing happens. We have not sufficiently recognized the tremendous things that are bound up with the Lord speaking to us. If the Lord has said anything to you, be very careful that you give heed, that you do not let that go, that you do not despise that. God does not come for nothing with such an object in view, and with such tremendous possibilities; He is not playing with us. It is the most solemn as well as the most glorious thing, in possibility and prospect, if, and when, the Lord speaks to us. Do believe

that. You see, within His speaking, within His Word, there is all the possibility of God coming into expression.

I have illustrated this before in days gone by by the seed merchant who has a double window to his shop. On one side of the door, he has the seeds and the bulbs to look at - very uninteresting-looking, unpromising things. There is nothing attractive in their appearance; you do not want to take out your artist's palette and make paintings of seeds and bulbs. But, on the other side of his window, he has the full flower - the flower fully developed in its exquisite colors and wonderful form and he says, "This is *that*; all *this* is in *that*." That is the marvel of living things.

And when God speaks, all that is of God is there in that speaking, and when you and I get to glory and are glorified together with Him, He will only say, "This is that. You gave heed to something I said, and this is the result. I spoke to you: you received, you obeyed, you gave diligence: well, this is that - this is not something extra; it is just that." Do believe, do remember, that the Lord is constantly wanting to speak and to speak in the nature of a begetting - the bringing into being of an organism which is produced in heaven and has all heavenly features in it.

But of course this is in the power and custodianship of the Spirit of life. We have to receive the Spirit; the Spirit has to be in us to work out all these wonderful things in God's speaking. If we have the Spirit of God within, as we should do, or if the Spirit of God is accompanying the Word to us before we have actually received Him within: if the Spirit of God works upon that Word, then the purpose of God is realized. For us as Christians, it is most important that when we hear what God has to say we should be in the Spirit. It is most important that, when you go to meetings, if God should speak, you should be in the Spirit. You should take every measure to see that you are in the Spirit, that there is nothing there hindering the Spirit, nothing of which you know grieving the Spirit, working against the Spirit of God; because nothing is going to happen if that is so. With all the hearing, nothing will happen. But, being in the Spirit, all the mighty possibilities of God are taken up by the Spirit of God to be made real.

In this begetting, there may be a period of hidden activity, when we do not know what is happening, and perhaps we cannot sense anything happening; but God has spoken, and something *has* happened: we have answered. For the moment, for the time being, we do not know that anything is taking place, but it will come to light. Presently there will be a sensing that God has done something. That period may be longer or shorter, but it will surely be known that God has said something and God in saying something *did* something, started something, and His work will be manifested, something will be going on secretly. That is the meaning of being "begotten of God."

(b) Birth

That leads us, of course, to the next step. Many people have confused these two things - begetting and birth. They are not the same, either in nature or in grace. Birth - what is birth? Birth is the point at which manifestation begins, when what God has been doing begins to show itself, comes out into manifestation; life manifested now in some Divine organism, a new life, a new order of things.

I wonder if you have followed what I have been saying. You see, it is like this so often in the early part of the Christian life. God says something, and His Spirit is with us in the saying, and we make a response. Then, for the moment, we do not know that anything very much has happened. But something has happened. Sooner or later - it may be very soon, almost simultaneously with the act of God in us, or it may be after a period of secret operation within, and faith is being tested as to whether anything has happened at all - something comes out, and we find that we just cannot do what we did before, and we have now got to do things we never did before, and our way of thinking and speaking is becoming challenged and changed and transformed. We find that some new order has come into being, and it is making all the differences, and we are able more and more clearly and definitely to draw the line between what was and what is now, what we were and what we are now. That is the course of the normal Christian life: that this new thing has now begun to manifest itself, and we are aware that something new has been born, and we just cannot be what we were, we just cannot do what we did; we are behaving in new ways; something has come from another world; a new beginning has been made. It is a new organism altogether. "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17).

The main point about a constitution of a particular kind is that it begins to manifest its kind. That is birth - something of a particular kind. "Except one be born anew [or 'from above'] he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). The kingdom of God is a kind of order, a nature of things; not just a sphere, a place, but how things are done with God, in God's realm of things; what is fitting to God's realm, suitable to God's realm; how things happen and work in God's realm. And this new organism shows the nature of what is born in God's realm. Well, sometimes a little baby does act like a monkey, but normally it acts like a human being! I mean, it conforms to type. Some baby Christians act very strangely, but it is not long before you begin to realize that they are of another mold, everybody else begins to realize they are of another order, a new kind of being has been brought into manifestation, and now quite spontaneously they act according to their species, a heavenly order. That is being born from God - a manifestation of something, the bringing to light of something. That is very elementary, but it is testing.

(c) Growth

And if that is true as to the beginnings, then it must be true, increasingly true, in the matter of growth, following begetting and birth. Here a few quite simple but very vital things have to be noted.

(1) Christ Imparted

What is the principle and the basis of the growth of this heavenly organism, begotten of God, born from above? Well, the principle of growth is, from beginning to end, Christ imparted. All the Scriptures as the Word of God center in Christ. So is the begetting, the birth and the growth, all related to Christ. It is Christ imparted. Any ministry claiming to be the Word of God, which does not center in Christ, will not have God's effect. It is very important always to keep Christ to the fore if you are going to have God's ends reached: because from start to finish, initially, progressively and finally, God's object is the imparting of Christ - the imparting of Christ through the Word, by teaching, and the Holy Spirit working upon the Word, upon the teaching, concerning Christ.

It is something more than information about Christ. It is a ministration of Christ by the Spirit in the Word. I am quite sure you have learned, one way or the other - that is, negatively or positively, by failure or by success - you have learned that if you neglect the Word of God, if you neglect the ministry of the Word, your spiritual life is going to fall away, your spiritual growth is going to be stultified, arrested. If your Bible is kept to the fore all the time - I do not mean that you are reading it all day and night, but that it has the foremost place, so that if you can by any means get some few minutes with the Word of God you are after it - that is the way of growth, the way of the Spirit, the way of spiritual formation. Neglect the Word and neglect the ministry of Christ, and you lose out spiritually.

That is very elementary, but it is true. If Satan can raise up any excuse for your Bible remaining closed and out of hand, if he can fill your hands and your mind and your time with anything to keep you from the Word of God or from the ministry of the Word, he will do it. He is out to cut clean across your growth spiritually, because it is the increase of Christ. It is against the increase of Christ that he is set.

Take that quite solemnly. I say you prove it one way or the other. We have all proved it. We know that if we lose the ministration of the Word we lose our spiritual life. Christ is ministered to us for growth. And what is true of the Word is equally true of prayer: because, although we make prayer nine-tenths a matter of trying to get the Lord to serve our convenience, to be at hand just to give us the things we want, the real meaning of prayer is that we truly receive the Lord, we receive Christ. If we are seeking Christ in prayer, prayer will have a wonderfully refreshing, renewing, strengthening ministry. How often, in the weariness, the terrible weariness, of the way, when it seems impossible to drag on any

farther, if we just get away quietly for a few minutes with the Lord and draw in prayer upon Him - "Lord, I need You, I need strength, I need renewal" - how refreshed we are. It is so. If only we would make prayer more a matter of a ministry of Christ to us - not of asking for a lot of things that will make our lives a bit easier and more pleasant, but the increase of Christ -! The Holy Spirit works on that, He responds to that. So then, growth is a ministry of Christ through the Word - the teaching, the instruction, the ministry - and through prayer.

(2) Christ Assimilated

But then there is something further. After you have taken your meal, it may do you no good - it may do you a lot of harm. Food is not everything. There is such a thing as assimilation, and this is where the enemy usually scores. If he cannot stop us from the one thing and the other, the Word and the prayer, he will make frantic efforts to break in here. We must therefore make sure that, whatever has to be suspended for it, we do have at least a brief time for dwelling on the impartation, dwelling on Christ, dwelling on the Word.

That means an inward attitude. If you take food, and you have not, as it were, the right inward attitude toward that food, it does not do you any good. There is a complaint which has to do with what is called the pancreas, and if the pancreas is not functioning properly the food does not nourish the body. You can take as much as you like but it does not do any good. You can eat and eat, but the food does not profit the body. You need something to stimulate or restore the function of the pancreas. You know what I mean - this assimilation business, this inward attitude that draws upon the Word, draws upon the Lord, that dwells upon Him, just a few minutes perhaps in a day, but a quiet time of assimilation. That is the way of growth. You may come through eleven meetings of a conference, and what a heap of stuff you get, and it may profit you not a little bit. There is enough in one meeting to carry us a very long time, to accomplish a very great deal of spiritual growth and yet it may effect nothing at all. What do you do about it? Do you lay hold inwardly? Is your attitude, "I must have this! If this can help my spiritual life and growth, I lay hold of this, I break this up!" - do you take this attitude? It is essential to growth. Growth is organic, it is vital.

(3) Christ Known

And then, in the third place, growth is by Christ known - what the New Testament calls spiritual understanding. The Holy Spirit, working through the Word, working through prayer, working through our meditation, would bring us into an intelligence concerning the Lord, so that we are able to say, "Yes, I heard that, I received that; I have laid hold of that, I have been exercised over that; but I understand now, I see the meaning, the importance, the

value: I see." And there is a great deal connected with spiritual understanding in our spiritual growth. You know how true that is shown to be in the Word. Even one who had seen so much, and been given so much; who could say, "Well, coming to visions and revelations of the Lord, I knew a man about fourteen years ago caught up into heaven, shown unspeakable things not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:1-4); even such a man, who had had all that and much more, could say, as his life, his course here, was coming to an end, "'that I may know him' - that is still my ambition." It is growth by knowledge.

And that man wrote, as we know so well, to those who had some fairly rich impartation of Divine ministry - for consider how long Paul was at Ephesus. He said concerning his ministry: "I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). What a lot he had given those Ephesian believers! And yet he says, in writing to them at last, toward the end: "I... cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" ("the full knowledge of Him" is the word used); "having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling. what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe" (Eph. 1:15-19). There is something in knowing, in seeing, in understanding. It is the way of enlargement, the way of growth.

Of course, that is normal in a normal human being. We grow, and as we grow our understanding increases, and as our understanding increases so we grow. Spiritual understanding works both ways. It is a grand thing to find Christians, and even young Christians, who are getting to know the Lord - not just living on addresses and externalities, but themselves growing in the knowledge of the Lord.

All this is certainly vital union with Christ, and it is certainly organic. It is a matter of life, and it is a way of life, and it is all a matter of our union with our Lord. That is what provides it, that is what provokes it, that is what stimulates it, that is what begins it, that is what maintains it, that is what completes it. So you may come to John 15, and you have it all there, "In Me"; "abide in Me"; "in Me bear fruit"; "abide in Me, bear much fruit"; and so it goes on. It is all "in Christ."

CHAPTER 09

Consummated Union

7. Consummated Union

"And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling. And behold, there talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elijah; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: but when they were fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they were parting from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah: not knowing what he said. And while he said these things, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my Son, my chosen: hear ye him. And when the voice came, Jesus was found alone" (Luke 4:28-36).

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him... For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:17,19-21).

"...When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed... in that day" (2 Thess. 1:10).

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15:51-55).

"The Lord Jesus Christ... shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory" (Phil. 3:20-21).

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10).

"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Rev. 21:10-11).

We have, first of all, to take a far backward look to remind ourselves that, when God made man, He constituted him with a view to transfiguration: that is, with a view to Divine glory. That was His intention. But man revolted against God and committed spiritual suicide and, in his rebellion and failure, forfeited that wonderful destiny and, as we have read, God instantly pronounced "Vanity" upon the whole creation, or, as we expressed it earlier in this series, wrote at the heart of this creation and of man: "Disappointment." But God made His appointment with another man, the Man after His own heart, His own Son, who became Son of Man; and in that other Man, the Man Christ Jesus, eternal union was secured between those whom God foreknew as believers in Christ and His Son. He secured in His Son a new creation which could be transfigured or glorified. When we see the Lord Jesus in transfiguration on that mountain, we see in Him personally what the first Adam ought to have come to - man glorified, man transfigured; and when we read all these things later about being glorified together with Him, His bringing many sons to glory, our bodies being made like unto the body of His glory and the heavenly Jerusalem having the glory of God, and all those wonderful things, we just see the realization of the original intention. This is what God meant to be from the beginning, and which might, without any trouble or tragedy, have taken place so much earlier, through man's triumph in the time of his probation and testing.

But it is all now consummated in Christ Jesus, the Man in the glory. Glory, as we are never tired of saying, is the gratification of God the Creator and of His whole creation. Glory is simply being able to say, in the full wonderful enjoyment and realization: "This is how it ought to be!" That is glory. You know that even in little ways. You perhaps do not call it glory, but you feel it. If anything is just as you feel it ought to be, then inside you have a touch, a tinge, of glory. But conceive of mankind as a whole, and the whole creation, being just as they were meant to be, and everybody, without reservation or question, being able to say, "Well, this is as it ought to be!" - and that is glory. And when God can say - and His standard is very high, it is absolute - when God from His standpoint can say, "This is exactly as it ought to be, as I intended it to be": well, that indeed will be the day of glory.

That, then, is the consummation of this union with Christ, the union which we have been considering from its various aspects. The eternal union of being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; the creational and racial union of our being a new creation in Christ Jesus as the last Adam, the second Man; the marital union when the bride shall have

made herself ready, when all those affectional relationships between Him and her and her and Him have been brought to fullness, when no longer any question or doubt, hesitation or reservation of confidence exists: a perfect merging of two lives, His and His Church's - the marriage supper of the Lamb: this is the consummation of that. Further, the vocational union where the house of God has been established and God's heavenly order has been set up and manifested; the functional union of the Body of Christ, where that Body has served for the manifestation of Himself as its indwelling personality; and vital union, organic union, where His life, His Divine heavenly life, has brought the organism to its perfect expression and fulfillment. These are the aspects of union, all of which are taken up in this ultimate consummation - the consummation of all His glory.

Now you see that, in the passages we have read, all of which deserve much fuller consideration than we are giving them, this consummation is viewed in various ways and connections.

First we note the individual consummation, spiritual and physical. There are the individual sons being brought to glory, and in being brought to glory the individual physical body is transformed. It is a wonderful statement: "the body of our humiliation (shall) be conformed to the body of his glory" - all doctors and nurses out of a job, and all undoubtedly very glad to be so! All that realm of things finished, wound up; bodies of glory, glorified bodies "like unto the body of his glory." It is called the change from corruptible to incorruptible. How marvelous - incapable of being corrupted!

Oh, we would like to stop for a little while on the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus. It was a most wonderful thing, that raising of the Lord Jesus from the dead. Joseph begged the body of Jesus, and then, being given it, he and Nicodemus bought a hundred pounds' weight of embalming spices. It is a fairly good weight, a hundred pounds! You can picture those two old fellows carrying that tremendous load. And then they wrapped Him in the linen garment, and inside the garment all that weight of spices was wrapped up. And when they came into the tomb; after His resurrection they found it all there in order - no scattering of the spices all over the tomb; it is all there in order, the shape is unaltered. He has come through it all. Just as He passed through the closed doors later on, He has come out and left the shell. That is some indication of what a glorified body can do.

To be "conformed to the body of his glory": that is an individual consummation of union with Christ. The spirit is already joined with Him. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17), and that union of spirit is going to be consummated in a glorification of body, a new body of glory. That is the end of it. We have seen the corporate aspect of it. There are sons, but there is a seed. It is the same thing under another title or designation. It is the corporate Body of Christ: the Church glorified, "having the glory of God." The Church, having been His Body, having been in this manifold union with Him, is going to be a

"glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing"; the Church of glory having the glory of God.

And then - wonderful passage! - Christ is going to be vindicated in His saints, Christ vindicated in those in whom He has been dwelling. "He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed": Christ vindicated in His saints - a glorious thing. We who, here and now in this world, have been despised, who have been thought little or nothing of, we who have been set aside, who have been maligned, have been persecuted, who have suffered simply because Christ is in us, simply because of our union with Christ - oh, what it has meant, what it has sometimes cost! - that Christ in us is going to be glorified in us and marveled at in us. The scene is going to change: the indwelling of Christ is not always going to be a thing which means suffering, adversity, persecution, sorrow and trial. The indwelling of Christ ultimately in the consummation is going to be a most glorious thing - glorified in His saints and marveled at. We can understand that, if we view Him objectively, we shall marvel at Him when we see Him. But here the statement is that He is going to be marveled at in all them that have believed. It is the vindication of Christ and the vindication of the saints.

Now let us note that this is not only a future prospect. We could get excited about our visions and our dreams, our illusions - as they might be. We could have these wonderful ideas and conceptions, simply because they constitute the Christian faith. Christians believe such things as these. These are the things which go to make up what is called the religion of Christianity. But it is not just that. Oh, no: Christianity is, being different from all other religions, subject to experiment. It allows of being put to the test, and it stands up to the test and bears present evidence of its full reality. The hopes and expectations and anticipations of Christians are not just and only lying in the future. In the day in which you and I become, or in which any man or woman becomes, joined to the Lord, in a definite act, there is instantly an evidence of the ultimate glory.

Your experience and history may bear that out - so much so, that you find yourself looking back to those days, to the beginning, almost with longing eyes, with a wistful heart. There are people who sing, and who sing quite in accordance with their spirit:

*"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?"*

*"Return, O holy Dove, return
Sweet messenger of rest!"*

They go on,

*"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee."*

Yes, many have come to have to sing like that; but whether you sing like that or not, whether that is true or not - and it ought not to be true of Christians - there is always a looking back to those first days. For many of us it is like that. I remember so clearly my own first days and months, when the Lord got a full, clear, free way in my heart and life; they were wonderful. Not that they have not been wonderful since! But what happened? Why, we just had a taste of the glory! The evidence was born there and then that we were made for glory: our coming into the new creation in Christ Jesus is at once sealed and stamped with the destiny of the new creation - glory. God's new beginnings are always with glory.

But this is not only at the beginning - it happens repeatedly in the course of the Christian life. Sadly enough, we do not just go straight on without some tumbles, falls, blunders, sinning, slipping up, making grievous and sad mistakes in our Christian life, and when we do it the enemy is not slow to rush in and seek to put us right out altogether. We begin to feel very sad and very sorry for ourselves, and down we go; our spirits droop, and we get locked up with this thing. The glory has gone, and we think it is never going to come back again. But then somehow the Lord says something to us, He speaks to us again His word of reassurance, and the thing is put right; we lay hold in faith again, and the glory comes back. The Lord has not forsaken us, the destiny is not lost - it comes back again.

We go away from the Lord and we are miserable. There is no glory in being away from the Lord. You can see the difference between people when they were going on with the Lord and what they are now. But come back and you find glory is waiting. It is the experience again and again in our lives. The glory is waiting: we were made for it: our union with Christ is the assurance of it. Our drifting from Christ suspends the glory: we come back and it is there again. Get a controversy with the Lord, or let the Lord have a controversy with you - something about which the Lord has spoken, something that He has indicated as not according to His mind, or perhaps some experience, trial, difficulty, through which He allows us to pass - and we become bitter, sour, grieved; we allow ourselves to be gripped in the cold hand of that grievance with the Lord, and the glory all goes. But when we come back and put right the thing that the Lord has required, or return to the Lord and hand over the

grievance, and say, "Well, this is only ruining the whole of my life, spoiling everything; it must not remain I am going on with the Lord whatever it costs" - the glory comes back.

This glorification at the end is no fiction and it is no mere future expectation. It is a thing to which the Holy Spirit is witnessing all the way along. And may that not be one of the reasons why He brings about these crises in our lives - so that we shall not take too much for granted, that there shall be something continuously or repeatedly wonderful in our union with Christ? But what is the real purpose of these crises? Why does the Lord bring these crises in our lives? When we come up against things or are taken through difficult experiences and the necessity arises for some fresh adjustment, some fresh letting go, what is it all about? Well, you see, it all amounts to just this - making more room for the Lord Jesus because it is Christ who is the ground of glory: God's appointment is with His Son. Away from His Son it is disappointment: but when the Son gets a fuller place, a larger place, in us - perhaps through a crisis, through a battle, a re-adjustment - when He gets a fuller place there is still more ground for the glory of God. It is Christ in us who is the hope of glory; it is Christ in us who is the ground of glory. It is, in other words, our union with Christ that is to issue in glory, and as that union becomes deeper, stronger, fuller, more settled, so the ground for glory increases. We seem, as we go on in the Christian life, to have deeper crises all the way along. Somehow or other we come to the place where we think we have touched bottom, we can never go deeper; then we do get taken into something deeper, and the situation seems more hopeless than ever; but the Lord brings us through, and there is more life than ever, more of the Lord than ever, more glory than ever. Well, the word in the New Testament is: "the Spirit of glory resteth upon you" (1 Pet. 4:14). The way to glory is the suffering: as it was with the Head, so it must be with the members; as it was with the Master, so it must be with the servant; as with Him, so with us. It is the suffering and the glory - that is the way.

I will close there. It is the glorious end that is in view, and the end, let me repeat, can be put to the test now. You will perhaps remember my saying on former occasions that with me the matter of the Lord's coming does not rest and remain just as a matter of prophecy. I do not find a very great deal of exhilaration and inspiration in studying prophecy about the coming of the Lord. That is all right - do not misunderstand me! If you like to study prophecy, study it; but it does not always result in glory. But I do find this, that when we sing about the Lord's coming, it is not just the effervescence and enthusiasm of a few people singing. Something extra seems to come in, and that something extra is the Spirit of glory: because the Holy Spirit is not past, present and future - the Holy Spirit is timeless. The Holy Spirit is eternally - now - eternity in any one minute. With the Holy Spirit, the coming of the Lord Jesus is as though it were now. Speak of the coming, and the Holy Spirit says, "Yes, here is the evidence of it!" He gives it in the midst of the saints, and something of the glory is there when you sing about the coming of the Lord. It is not just a reminder that things are going to be better in the future. It is a touch and a taste of that future coming into the

"now." That is a good note on which to close: a note of the present reality of these things, all put to the test and experienced *now*, because the glory is not only future. We have the Spirit of glory resting upon us *now*, to attest the end all along the way. May the Lord keep us Christians like that, living in the spiritual good of our faith; not upon doctrine alone, not upon truths, but in the reality of those things in the Holy Spirit *now*.

In Christ

by

Theodore Austin-Sparks

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CHAPTER 01

The All-Inclusive “In”

There is no phrase or formula which occurs with greater frequency in the New Testament than this, "in Christ." It sometimes varies in translations when "by" and "through" and "with" are used, and sometimes in the original text it changes in form, e.g. "in Christ Jesus," "in him," etc., but in all the two hundred times of its occurrence the principle is the same. In the whole range of Christian dogma there is nothing more expensive, and yet nothing less understood and appreciated.

In one consummate declaration we are told that God has purposed to sum up all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10) and that outside of Him there is nothing which has any place in the eternal purpose and intention of God. The plan, the method, the resources, the times, the eternities, are Christospheric.

The Creation is *IN* Christ.

The Life is *IN* Christ.

The Acceptance is *IN* Christ.

The Redemption is *IN* Christ.

The Righteousness is *IN* Christ.

The Sanctification is *IN* Christ.

The Hope is *IN* Christ.

The Spiritual Blessings are *IN* Christ.

The Consolation is *IN* Christ.

The Peace is *IN* Christ.

The Effectual Prayer is only *IN* Christ.

The Strength and Riches are *IN* Christ.

The Eternal Purpose is *IN* Christ.

The New Creation is *IN* Christ.

The Promises are *IN* Christ.

The Escape from Condemnation is *IN* Christ.

The One Body is *IN* Christ.

The Perseverance is *IN* Christ.

The Gathering into One is *IN* Christ.

The Bonds of Suffering Believers are *IN* Christ.

The "No Separation" is *IN* Christ.

The Perfect Man is *IN* Christ.

The Helpers Together are *IN* Christ.

There are the Churches *IN* Christ.

There are the Dead *IN* Christ.

There is the One New Man and the Perfect Man *IN* Christ.

We are Complete *IN* Christ.

The context of this formula ranges from eternity, through the ages, to eternity.

In eternity past we were chosen and elected together *IN* Christ. Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 5:13.

Through time, by the Cross, this eternal heavenly fact is wrought in literal and experimental form expressed by different terms implying specific progressive spiritual truths, but always the same principle.

"Planted together in the likeness of his death. Rom. 6:5.

"Quickened... together with Christ." Eph. 2:5.

"Raised... up together... in Christ." Eph. 2:6.

"Made... to sit together... in Christ." Eph. 2:6.

"All things to be gathered together... in Christ." Eph. 1:10

"Perfected together." 1 Cor. 1:10.

"Fitly framed together" in Christ. Eph. 2:21.

"Knit together," Col. 2:2.

"Builded together" in Christ. Eph. 2:20.

"Live together with him." 1 Thess. 5:10.

"Working together with him." 2. Cor. 6:1.

"Striving together." Phil. 1:27.

Then comes a climax, at the end of this time, when all the foregoing is accomplished and we are *"together... caught up."* 1 Thess. 4:17.

Finally the eternity to come looms into view and we see that we are to be *"glorified together"* with Him. Rom. 8:17.

Then we call to mind the Pauline couplet - which is strictly not Pauline but of the Divine Spirit of truth - namely "in Adam" and "in Christ." On the one side - our relation to Adam, the old creation, by nature - we see one set of conditions; and on the other - by our incorporation in Christ - we see a new and different set.

"IN ADAM"

"The Lord God... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Gen. 2:7.

"The first man Adam became a living soul." 1 Cor. 15:45.

"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Gen. 2:17.

"As in Adam all die." 1 Cor. 15:22.
"The law of sin and of death." Rom. 8:2.
"He also is flesh." Gen. 6:3.
"The flesh profiteth nothing." John 6:63.
"I" - Failure. Rom. 7.
"The old man that waxeth corrupt." Eph. 4:22.
"The mind of the flesh." Rom. 8:6.
"In my flesh... no good thing." Rom. 7:18.
"Of the flesh... corruption." Gal. 6:8.
"That which is born of the flesh is flesh." John 3:6.
"The end... death." Rom. 6:21.

"IN CHRIST"

"He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit." John 20:22.
"The last Adam... a life-giving spirit." 1 Cor. 15:45.
"Newness of life." Rom. 6:4.
"In Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Cor. 15:22.
"The law of the Spirit of life." Rom. 8:2.
"Spirit" - Victory. Rom. 8.
"The new man... created in righteousness and holiness of truth." Eph. 4:24.
"The new man." Col. 3:10.
"Newness of the spirit." Rom. 7:6.
"In the likeness of his resurrection." Rom. 6:5.
"Have crucified the flesh." Gal. 5:24.
"Our old man was crucified." Rom. 6:6.

All this, which is nothing more than quoting Scripture, will serve to emphasize the Divine inclusiveness and exclusiveness, and will help, we trust, to recognition of the great fact that **NO MAN CAN LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE; THERE IS ONLY ONE WHO CAN LIVE THAT LIFE, AND THAT IS CHRIST HIMSELF.** We must have such an experimental incorporation into Him that He lives His life through us as members of His one Body, so that "to me to live is Christ" and "it is no longer I... but Christ." As the blacksmith's iron is in the fire and also the fire is in the iron, so first we must realize our position in Christ through the Cross ere Christ can manifest Himself through us.

CHRIST TO BE EXPRESSED THROUGH BELIEVERS

It is very important to recognize a truth upon which Christ laid considerable emphasis, that is, that in a sense, He never intended to be out of this world again during the age, after having once come into it as His rightful heritage. He came to redeem it, to secure the judicial right to sovereignty in it, and to initiate, continue, and complete the restoration of it to His own dominion. This is all to be done by His own presence in it in one or other of the forms of His manifestation. While He said much about going away, and returning to the Father, He also made His abiding very clear in the words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the age." Paul later said that the central feature or reality of "the mystery... hid from the ages..." is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The personal physical presence of Christ in the world was firstly to manifest the nature, method, means, laws, purpose, and power of His abiding presence beyond the days of His flesh; and secondly to make this possible and actual by the work of His Cross. He Who was born out from God shows what is the necessity for and the nature of being "born of the Spirit" if the will of God is to be done on the earth as it is done in the heavens. Then right at the commencement of His ministry He puts the Cross in the figure of baptism. From that time all that He said and did was in the light and power of the Cross. The teaching of Christ can never be effectual, and the works of Christ can never be continued, unless the Cross is the basis. To try to propagate "the teaching of Jesus" or to effect the work of Jesus without having as the basis all that He meant by His Cross, is to labour in vain and without the acceptance of the Father. It will be necessary to return to this connection again at a later stage. So far, however, it leads us to the point where we see that, having in His personal physical presence established the basis and nature of His permanent work, He by the Cross effected that which made possible the bringing of men on to the same plane or into the same realm, and then changed the separate and individual presence for the corporate and universal. Thus "the church, which is His body" was brought into being as the abiding instrument of His world-incarnation. This is the only kind of "church" which He recognizes, made up of those who have been "joined unto the Lord... one spirit." The nature of this joining remains also for later consideration. The word or term "Body" is not mere metaphor. The members of His Body stand in relation to Christ just as our physical bodies stand in relation to our own selves - the means of manifestation, expression, and transaction. This truth is very discriminating, and goes to the root of all matters of life and service. "Working for the Lord," "praying to the Lord," etc., will be seen to have a deeper law which governs their effectiveness.

We cannot take up work for Christ - plan, scheme, devise, organize or enter upon Christian enterprise - and so command the Divine seal and blessing. We cannot pray as we incline, even though it be to the extent of passion and tears, and so secure the Divine response. Failure to recognize this is bringing multitudes of people to despair because of no seal upon their ardent labours, and no answer to their prayers. In the unfolding of the laws of His own effective life the Master put tremendous emphasis upon the fact that the words that He

spoke, and the works that He did, were not of (out from) Himself, it was the Father both speaking the words and doing the works. A thorough study of the Gospel by John will convince that this was so. Said Christ, "The Son can do nothing out from himself, but what he seeth the Father doing..." and this knowledge of the transactions of the Father as to what, how, and when - all most important - was, as He made clear, because He abode in the Father. So for all the future of His work He prayed that His disciples might abide in Him. Thus the law of effective and fruitful life, service, prayer, etc., is that there shall be such a oneness that we only do - but surely do - what He is doing. We must know in our spirit just what Christ is doing, how He is doing it, the means which He will use, and His time for it. Moreover, our prayers must be the prayers of the Lord Himself prayed in us and through us by the Holy Spirit. This is surely made very clear as being the realm in which the Church in apostolic times lived. This will demand a considerable sifting of all undertakings in the name of Jesus, and will require that nothing is done until the mind of the Lord has been made known. But this will secure a hundred percent effectiveness, and issues which will never perish. For the practical purposes of God in this age Christ is the One Body holding fast the Head, and the business of every member is to realize more and more fully the meaning of this incorporation and oneness of identity.

We are expressly told in the Word that we are to "put on the new man" and that this "new man" is Christ. This is but another form of expressing the truth of "in Christ," but it carries with it a whole revelation of practical provision.

Christ is our Redemption. He "was made unto us... redemption." 1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14.

Christ is our Righteousness. 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 4:24; Phil. 3:9.

Christ is our Sanctification. 1 Cor. 1:2,30.

Christ is our Faith. Mark. 11:22 ("Have the faith of God," lit. trans.); Acts. 26:18; Gal. 2:20 (R.V.); Eph. 1:15; Phil. 3:9; Col. 1:4.

Christ is our Peace. John 14:27; John 16:33; Eph. 2:14.

This line can be followed on numerous characteristics, e.g. Love, Hope, Wisdom, Mind, Power and Might, Authority, Glory. We suggest a comparison of translations in the references, best of all in the original. The point is that, on all these matters, under given conditions the natural outfit will break down and will have to be laid aside, but in Christ we have a new equipment at every point. For instance, our faith will not take the strain of the requirements of a deep experience of trial and adversity, but if we "live by the faith of the Son of God," the issue will be different. All tests will prove whether we are living by His faith which should have become ours, or whether there is a weakness in our union with Him. The

same is true on all points. It is blessed to realize that "in Christ" we have a whole new and saving endowment of virtues and graces. Thus it is that we "put away... the old man... and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4:22-24).

SOME SIGNIFICANT PREPOSITIONS

So far we have been led in our theme by three simple Greek prepositions, namely: *ek* - out from; *en* - in; and *sun* - together.

These three fragments really summarize the truth and nature of corporate union with Christ, and lay down the essential laws and vital principles of all true and effective spiritual life and service. Some further consideration of this may be well before proceeding further. Christ took great care to repudiate any suggestion and to remove any notion that anything which characterized His mission as Son of man was of His own originating.

1. "EK"

- (a) As to Himself. He repeatedly affirmed "I came out from God." (John 7:29; 8:42; 17:8, etc.).
- (b) As to His apostleship (Heb. 3:1), He describes Himself as "sent" by God (Gr. apostello) (John 3:17,34; 5:36; 6:29,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21).
- (c) As to His vision: "What he seeth the Father doing... these the Son also doeth." (John 5:19).
- (d) As to His works: "The works of my Father" (John 5:36; 9:3,4; 10:25,32,37; 14:10).
- (e) As to the words: "I speak not of (out from) myself" (John 8:28,38; 12:49; 14:10; 17:8,14).
- (f) As to the Kingdom: "My kingdom is not of (out from) this world" (John 18:36).
- (g) This can all be gathered up under a statement in which a different preposition is used in the Greek but one conveying a similar thought: "Now they know that all things... are from thee" (John 17:7.).

The main principle which these all-embracing declarations establish is that only that which proceeds out from God is recognized by God, fulfils the Divine purpose, reaches the Divine

standard, and returns to God. This implies that there are other sources than God. Over against some of the foregoing statements regarding Divine origins the Master has placed such as:

1. "Ye are of (out from) your father the devil." "Ye do the works of (out from) your father," etc. (John 8:44,41).
2. "Not of (out from) myself" (John 14:10). This was said, of course, in His capacity of representing man as "made in the likeness of sinful flesh," not as Son of God on the side of Deity. It was ever the enemy's endeavour to get Him to act in the flesh, as man would act, so that the enemy might have ground upon which to wreck Him, but He refused to act on the principle of the flesh. Thus it is clear - and all the Scriptures combine to show it - that the flesh is a source of things which have no acceptance with God, even though they operate through religious forms and "Christian" enterprises.
3. Further, "the world" is spoken of constantly as producing much which God refuses and only hands over to judgment. See the occurrences of "of" (out from) as to the world in John 17, and look further in John's Epistles, with a general comparison with the teaching of Peter and Paul.

Thus we are brought to see that a special Divine significance attaches to that which is "of God."

Now what is true of Christ has to have a counterpart in all who are to be either owned of God or used to the fulfilment in any way of His eternal purpose.

They must be:

- (a) Born of (out from) God.
- (b) Commissioned of (out from) God.
- (c) Have a spiritual revelation and vision of (out from) God.
- (d) Speak the words of (out from) God.
- (e) Do only the works of (out from) God.
- (f) Seek first the Kingdom of (out from) God.
- (g) Be sure that in their case "all things are of (out from) God." (2 Cor. 5:18).

This was the apostolic basis. The Holy Spirit had come to make this both possible and actual. This accounts, therefore, for the effectiveness of their testimony and labours. They knew what it meant to be baptized "in one Spirit... into one body," of which Body Christ is Head, so that really the Sovereign Head but carried on His work through the members thus incorporated. They had no independent action, no self-laid plans, no schemes or enterprises or undertakings which were the product of their own thought, reasoning, devising, or

enthusiasm, even though it were "for Christ," or "for the Kingdom," or "in His name." All had to come by revelation of the Spirit from the Head.

Now the second preposition shows how this was so in Christ's case and must be so with us.

2. "EN"

For Christ, *en* represented a spiritual position in which He abode.

This spiritual position is suggested in passages, such as the following:

"The Son... who is (not was) in heaven." (John 3:13).

"I am in the Father" (John 14:10).

It must, of course, be recognized that this relationship was the work of the Holy Spirit. From the time of the Spirit's lighting upon Him at the Jordan, all the movements were by the Spirit; even the Cross was wrought out "through the eternal Spirit." He abode in God, and on the side of His humanity this was maintained by the Spirit. There were suggestions, temptations, opportunities, possibilities, methods, means, ideas, provocations, emotions, sentiments, and all the activities of intellect, soul, body, but it was His way to hold these in the Divine Spirit and not to act or proceed upon them as such. He would not commit Himself to any of them or to any man save as He had the Spirit's witness that the urge to do so proceeded from God. Thus He was saved the remorse, confusion, disappointment, shame, failure, and chaos, which always follow upon the uprising of the "natural (soulish, Gk.) man" into the spiritual world. Thus, having been anointed by the Spirit, He abode in God and refused to be drawn out. This is everything in the matter of fullness of life and effectiveness of service.

3. "SUN"

We shall not attempt in this brief treatise to deal in any detail with the particular significance of this preposition. It relates in a special way to the corporate character of the Body of Christ. Its importance is immense, but this is not the place for embarking on so large a theme. We merely remark here that its use emphasizes the fact that in the thought of God those who are "born from above" are not merely so many individuals but are related to one another as the members of a body. They are "together" with one another and "together" with Christ as Head of the one Body, and were so regarded by God in every phase of Christ's redemptive work. The words of Ps. 139:15,16 express this mystery. The practical outworking of this truth is dealt with in greater detail elsewhere.

The general ground of "in Christ" has been presented, but we must emphasize this essential counterpart of Christ's life. As the Father is the Head of the Son, so the Son is the Head of the Body; and as He abode in the Father, so He declares that we must abide in Him. We must not be led to act upon anything from within our natural lives, or anything from without as acting upon us, until we have judged it in the spirit. This applies especially to religious matters, for it is in this realm that we may make the greatest mistakes. The response of our natural emotions, or reasoning powers, or will, to the impact of some suggestion may lead to much evil. The danger of much evangelistic work, spiritual teaching, and missionary propaganda is in its tendency to stir the emotions and offer spiritual prizes, instead of bringing the imperative note of Christ and the apostles.

Many a decision has been made under these conditions which has proved incapable of taking the inevitable strain of testing and to be something less than a real work of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps there never was a time when there was more of what is called "Christian service," when there was as much organization, machinery, advertisement, expenditure of time, energy, and means in "Christian" enterprise, or when there were more people interested; but it is doubtful whether - speaking comparatively - there ever was as little real spiritual effectiveness. The root question is, how much of all this proceeds directly by revelation and initiation from God by the Eternal Spirit? Of how much may it be truly said that it came by revelation of the Holy Spirit, or that "the Holy Ghost said," or that "it seemed good unto the Holy Ghost"? On the other hand, how much of it is the product of human discussion, devising, impulse, enthusiasm, imaginativeness, philanthropy, interest in a good cause, etc.? The measure of the identification of the instrument with Christ in corporate union is the measure of the real work of God accomplished through it. There may be much which looks like success and impresses with a sense of real accomplishment, but when "the fire" has done its work it may be found that the real as against the apparent is very small. In the long run "the flesh profiteth *NOTHING*," though it may seem to get results. It is not what is done for God, but what is done by God that will last. Ours it is to see that we are utterly in Christ, and living by the Spirit. All the rest will be spontaneous. There can be no abiding until there has been a real incorporation, and this brings us to where we can proceed to show how this union is effected.

CHAPTER 02

“In the Likeness of His Death”

It has often been pointed out that the death of Christ had, and has, a twofold aspect. Firstly, there is the substitutionary, which is unique, isolated, and conclusive. Nothing can be added to that, nor can it be shared in its vicarious and redeeming efficacy. We receive the benefit of it as a gift by faith and are justified.

But there is a second aspect, namely, the representative. In this, we ourselves in the nature of Adam, in his fallen state, are included. Our sin is dealt with in the substitutionary aspect, ourselves are dealt with in the representative. While both of these are vitally and fundamentally related to our salvation, the latter will find the Divine emphasis when we come to living the Christ-life and fulfilling the Christ-purpose.

The Old Testament is full of this latter emphasis in type and teaching. Abraham must needs be separated from "country" (the world), "kindred" (natural relationships), and "father's house" (the "old man"). As one writer has pointed out, his whole life was a constant application of the death-principle to the many phases of the natural man. He made an initial move when he came out of the land of the Chaldeans, but his progress was arrested at Haran until his father was dead. The "old man" cannot be taken beyond the Jordan (the Cross). The old life cannot come into the borders of the "heavenly places." The writer quoted points out the meaning of the many relationships and incidents in Abraham's life in their carnal nature, and of the trouble, arrest, and tragedy which they brought; and further, how they had to be cut off and abandoned. Some of these were:

1. Egypt - the realm of the senses; the attempt to find spiritual strength and enablement through the tangible, apparent, and present.
2. Lot - "the upright-natural mind." "The spiritual and natural mind seem at first so united that it is difficult to distinguish between them. The difference between the spiritual and the upright-natural mind is seen in the whole course and conduct of Abraham and Lot." It was only after Lot was separated from him that the Lord said to Abraham "Lift up now thine eyes."
3. The Canaanites - false religion; spiritual, but satanic; outward rites with accompanying signs and wonders, but demoniacal.
4. Hagar and Ishmael - expediency; trying to obtain spiritual ends in a natural way; trying to be fruitful, and that through self-effort, fleshly means, on natural grounds.

The principle can be followed in other details of his life, but we are content to point it out and leave it.

Abraham, in order to come within the terms and fruitfulness of an eternal covenant, must be a man of the Spirit, a spiritual man, and this on a basis of faith.

In like manner Moses had to be disciplined and prepared. One of the most remarkable and - to many - most perplexing statements in Scripture is that in Exod. 4:24: "The Lord met him, and sought to kill him"; and this, after the vision and the commission.

We know that it was in relation to the covenant-sign of circumcision, but we must remember that circumcision was the symbol of the cutting off of the whole body of the flesh, and this is related to our identification with Christ in death (Col. 2:11,12). Forty years earlier, Moses, with a conception of Divine service, had attempted it with carnal means and in his own natural life. This had brought the inevitable failure and arrest. For a further forty years the principle of death had to be applied, until the only honest expression in relation to spiritual service was "I cannot." The Lord had deliberately taken pains to bring him to nothing. The basic truth, however, must take some literal form of recognized testimony, there must be a definite expression of a spiritual fact - if you like, an ordinance; but the ordinance is nothing in itself, only as a confession of the acceptance of the spiritual reality. Circumcision was this in Israel, the encircling of blood, separating between the natural man and the spiritual, the old and the new; hence the incident mentioned. The progress of Moses was suddenly arrested, and with a shock he was brought up against the need to make in an act a definite and concrete declaration of the law of encompassment of the end of the flesh. We may take it that if we essay to carry the uncircumcised flesh, or the natural man, into the realm of spiritual life or service we shall be smitten down - that natural man will be met with the challenge of the judgment of Calvary.

Thus we see how the truth of incorporation into the representative death of Christ lies at the root of Old Testament experience, and this can be traced right through the Scriptures. The history of Israel is one long commentary upon it. The Red Sea is the substitutionary death, the wilderness the revelation of the need for the Jordan as the representative death, or identification in the death.

Having come to the blessings of the substitutionary work of Christ, and the enjoyment of justification by faith, we shall - if our spiritual life is a pure and progressive one - begin to learn how very wide is the gap between the old creation and the new, between the natural man and the spiritual. This will come to us only progressively and line upon line, but with God it is already a settled conclusion. With Him there is no overlapping of the two, they are poles asunder. The bringing of these two together is to Him in the nature of spiritual fornication and the fruits of life and service are unlawful.

It is His purpose to make this increasingly clear to us, and while to us there may seem to be much mixture and intertwining, He will show us with ever increasing clearness that He has driven the dimensions of the eternal Cross between the two. We have given much Scripture in previous chapters which shows the fundamental differences between these two, the natural and the spiritual.

To be a Christian is not just to change the direction of our interests - to turn all our faculties, abilities, energies, resources, emotions, acumen, enthusiasms, etc., over from self or the world to the account of Christianity, religion, the gospel or the kingdom of God.

In the realm of the life and things of God there are two words uttered over the natural man by God, "Nothing" and "Cannot." To fail to recognize the significance of these two words is to come into the hopeless, heart-breaking, barren realm of Rom. 7. Fruitless struggle will result if there be any genuine spiritual aspiration; and whether there be such or not (the notion in the latter event being merely that of the natural man directed toward Christian enterprise) the service will be ineffective in all true spiritual attainment. No flesh shall glory in His presence, and the religious flesh is no more acceptable than the irreligious. How many there are who are seeking either to attain unto a standard of spiritual satisfaction, or to do God's service, with their own resources of intellect, will, emotion - reason, energy, passion. Hence all the unapostolic organization, machinery, advertisement.

No! For acceptance and service there must be a new man, and this new man has a new life, a new mind, a new spirit, a new way, a new capacity, a new consciousness, in fact "all things are become new." The one concerned comes more and more to realize how differently God does things from the way men do them; yes, and what different things God does. The aims of God, the methods of God, the means used by God, the times of God, are an education and often a discipline to this man in Christ. Until the "old man" is well crucified, God's ways and means and times and aims are a sore trial to him and he will either revolt and break away in himself or he will go down into the depths; but he will come anyway to see that in the intention of God, he - the natural man - must go to the Cross, where God put him conclusively in the representative man Jesus, the Christ. The touch of the natural man upon the things of the Spirit is death and desolation; hence the Lord is always taking precautions against this natural life in His own children and passing them through that which brings them very low and puts them, on their natural side, out of action. He drove a stake through Paul's flesh as a precaution against the uprising of his soulish life into exaltation; in order, further, that there might be no arrest, but rather an increase of spiritual usefulness. We have a very limited knowledge of our own natural springs - the motives, the nature of our desires, even for spiritual blessing; the personal interests in the kingdom of God; the craving to possess, to be satisfied, to have influence, recognition, freedom; and a multitude of other constitutional elements. The Lord knows how all our sources of life and expression are poisoned and tainted. He would not have us introspective and self-analyzing, but He would

tell us His own verdict upon the "natural man," and ask us to accept the Divine requirements that he should be crucified. When, by faith in His judgment and word, we thus accept the Cross, He proceeds to work out the death in us, and we have a growing realization of the need for such. Then we refuse to move other than in the Spirit on the ground of God's fact in Christ - "I have been crucified with Christ... it is no longer I" (Gal. 2:20). As the holy anointing oil was not to come upon man's flesh in the typical anointing in the Old Testament, so the Holy Spirit, typified there, will never be allowed to come upon uncrucified flesh in this age of the Spirit. Calvary precedes Pentecost in history and in experience. A true revelation of the worthlessness of the natural man in God's sight has always been a necessary prelude to anointing for service. The "I cannot" of Moses, the "Woe is me" of Isaiah, the "I am but a child" of Jeremiah, the "I am a sinful man" of Peter, the "In me... dwelleth no good thing" of Paul, are typical of all who have been the called of God, and these expressions are the result of the application of the true meaning of the Cross. And yet they were religious enthusiasts, and devoted to God in the realm of their soulish nature. It is ever the love of God which leads by the way of Calvary, though bitter may be the cup when the soul (not the spirit) is poured out unto death, for only so can there be that life of emancipation from the limitations of the natural into the universal dimensions of the spiritual.

Let us look into the Word again and keep this thought before us, and as we see that His death is our death let us say "Amen: Lord, work it out"; and then we shall be ready to "know him, and the power of his resurrection... becoming conformed unto his death."

CHAPTER 03

"In the Likeness of His Resurrection"

"That in my dying flesh the life whereby Jesus conquered death might show forth its power"
(2 Cor. 4:11 - Conybeare).

Let it be immediately understood that, while resurrection as a whole may be here mentioned and ranged, it is not the future resurrection of the body but the immediate *SPIRITUAL* significance to the believer that particularly governs our consideration. The range is very great, but we shall deliberately seek to keep within the strict limits of essential and practical truth, using such wider Scriptural illustrations as will seem most helpful and enforcing. We feel that God would have us put as concise and definite a basis for prayer and spiritual enquiry as possible into the hands of His people, and not extend to a treatise. Time is short, duties are many and pressing, problems are acute, and spiritual "helps" are few in the realm of Christian life and service. Hence our need is to have vital basic principles emphasized as finger-posts to effectiveness and victory.

It is all-important that, at the outset, we should recognize what a great scope and tremendous emphasis the subject of resurrection has in the Word of God. As a principle it is patent or latent, according to the measure of our discernment, from the beginning to the end of the Divine revelation of Scripture. Undoubtedly, all things which are of God have their new beginning and vital value since "the fall" in and by the representative and inclusive resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Note how much is wrapped up with the Divine attestation of His Sonship at resurrection. Note the specific attestation itself. Not at His birth nor at His death, not at Bethlehem nor at Calvary, is this special declaration from heaven made - the thing is true there, we know - but the attestation is reserved for resurrection. "Declared to be (marked out as) the Son of God with (in) power... by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Psalm 2 prefigures the counsel of malignity against the Lord's Anointed. This counsel is put into action to its utmost limit; He is slain. The ultimate issue is the heritage of the nations; the immediate issue in resurrection is a decree (verse 7) "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee." He is the representative "firstborn from the dead" of a specific and peculiar kind of sonship.

To this very passage the company of believers in the presence of a further counsel of malignity made their appeal (Acts 4:25) and received at once a further Divine acknowledgment; the place was shaken, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and there were other triumphant issues. Similarly an effectual testimony was born at Antioch of Pisidia with this very passage at the center of that preached (Acts 13:33), clearly relating the Divine announcement to the resurrection. Then again, this particular transcendence of Christ's Sonship above angels and all else has this very passage quoted as its basis in Heb.

1:5. We shall see later that this is related to the inclusive dominion in the universe of the race in Christ, and also to the dethronement of the "lord of death" (Heb. 2:5-15).

Now this has been said simply in order to signify where the finger of God makes its emphatic seal, and how God is jealous for a testimony to the resurrection of Christ. We are then able to draw attention to a very vital principle in Christian experience as coming out of the Divine truth. Have you ever noticed that even that which had, and has, its origin in God, which comes forth from God, which is brought about by a supernatural act of God, has to pass into death in order that by resurrection it may have its supreme Divine seal and attestation?

The Old Testament is full of types of this truth. Reflect upon Isaac alone. He was brought into the world by a miracle. There was no natural ground upon which to account for him. (See Rom. 4:19.) Yet he must die, and (as is said of Abraham's body) he was "as good as dead" when the knife was lifted; but for all time, resurrection is the point of Divine emphasis in this story, especially in the vindication of Abraham's faith. Isaac was a type of Christ and, as we have said, although Christ was a miracle in His birth and truly the Son of God incarnate, yet the death prepares the way for a superlative testimony from heaven. Without tracing this principle (which you may do for yourself) so far as the Word is concerned, let us note its application in experience as to ourselves. We are born of God, and are sons in the Son by right of our birth from above; but how true it is that the course of our spiritual experience seems to be deeper and ever deeper baptisms in death - His death - in order that more and more of the power of His resurrection may be known by us and manifested in us. There seem to be cycles, or tides, of death and life, and while each cycle or tide seems to compass our end more completely or to leave us at lower ebb than ever, there comes with ever-increasing fullness an uprising of spiritual life and knowledge and power. Thus while the death destroys "the old man," we live increasingly by that life, "the new man," which is not human but Divine, and upon which - and upon which alone - the seal of God rests. This is a deliberate course taken by God with us.

See it further in service and work. Is it not true that most, if not all, of the pieces of work raised up by God to fulfil some ministry in His eternal purpose have firstly had every evidence of being God-born, but later have gone down into a time of deep and awful death, seeming disintegration, break-up, loss, until it seemed that nothing would remain? Sometimes this has been by persecution, massacre, and that counsel of malignity; sometimes by a series of what we humanly call catastrophies, tragedies, misfortunes. Sometimes the causes are not apparent; they are inside, like some evil thing sapping the very vitals. Sometimes, again, it is an inexplicable arrest and pressure, a paralysis and a deadlock, and it is difficult to know whether it is from within or from without. All we know is that death reigns, or appears so to do. Place this rule alongside of some of the great missions for work abroad or at home, and see how truly it applies. What is true in the

greater is also true in the smaller - a local fellowship, a Bible or Sunday-school class, or some other piece of work. Provided always that the initiation of the work was of Him, that we were put into it by Him, and that it has been kept on such lines as are consistent with His mind and purpose, such an experience of death is not an argument that the Lord is not in it, but may be regarded as evidence of His concern to put the work ever more fully where His highest attestation can be given.

The principle holds good in the matter of received truth. The Lord may reveal to us truth which is of great importance and which is intended to be tremendously fruitful in life and ministry. It comes with the power of a revelation, and for a while we rejoice in its light, talk about nothing else, and find that it works. Then something happens. Whatever that may be, the result is that we go down to death with and because of that truth. For the time it seems to have lost its potency, and all hope that we shall be saved is abandoned. We wonder if we shall ever be able honestly to believe that again, much less preach it. But at length, by a touch of life which leaves us as those who dream (Ps. 126:1) and in spite of all our past fears, that very truth is our chief emphasis, but now with a solemnity and reality not known before. Moreover the Lord is making its ministry a power to others which is quite new and previously unknown. So in all this He seems to get more for Himself by resurrection than He did by birth. This may seem largely a mystery, but it is evident and true to experience. There are other directions in which this applies, one of which we might mention. It is that of relationships. How frequently have we come up against this perplexing experience.

Between those related - sometimes in the deepest bonds - for some reason, often quite without any natural ground, there has come the severest strain. It appears that the old ground of fellowship is entirely breaking down and being lost. It may be by reason of some spiritual crisis in the life of one of those affected, some call to service or to go a little farther with the Lord, or some test of faith or loyalty to God. Whatever may be the cause, seen or unseen, such an experience is not uncommon. The first issue is an end of the kind or level of fellowship that has been. It would sometimes appear that the whole thing has broken down and gone forever. At such a time serious questionings arise as to the apparent antagonism between a conceived idea of what God requires and what looks manifestly to be plain, common duty to others.

This is a bitter and harrowing time to the soul-life. The ultimate issue - if there has been a definite willingness to suffer the loss of all for His sake, and a holding on to God though blindly and with much weakness - is that the whole thing is brought back again, but yet not the same. "That which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be," (1 Cor. 15:37): it is the same yet different. It is on a higher plane; a purer, holier, stronger, deeper thing, and capable of much greater spiritual fruitfulness. In a word, in the grave it has shed much of the human and in the resurrection it has become much more Divine. The elements which are temporal and natural have been supplanted by more of the spiritual and eternal.

Having given this space to stating and illustrating a fact, and enunciating or disclosing an abiding law, we must now say something about the nature of resurrection.

What is resurrection? It is the power of ascendancy over death. What is the central factor in resurrection? It is a life which cannot know death, a life which is indestructible. Such is the nature of the resurrection to which we are giving our attention. There is a resurrection which is but the re-animation of the body for a time or for a judgment. That is not our subject. We are speaking of the resurrection of Christ and our incorporation thereinto.

By our new birth from above we become partakers of the life of God. That which the Scripture in our versions call "eternal life" is the unique possession of the born-again; no man by nature has it. The whole course of true spiritual experience is for the increase and development of that life, and this particularly takes place, as we have seen, through crises and cycles of death and resurrection. What is the Lord's supreme aim with His children? It is undoubtedly to get them to live by His life only. To this end He will more and more take away their own life.

As the time of the Church's translation becomes more imminent, this truth will have an increased emphasis, so that to live victoriously at all, or work effectively, there will need to be a great drawing upon the Lord for His life. When the saints are translated that they shall not see death, and when that great shout of victory over death and the grave goes up (1 Cor. 15:54,55) it will not be by some outside, external operation of Divine power alone, but it will be the triumph of the resurrection life within the Body of Christ expressing itself in that final glorious consummation of a process of ascendancy which has been going on since the time when life was received at new birth by faith in the risen Lord. This is a most important truth to recognize, for it explains everything. Why must we know weakness, impotence, worthlessness, nothingness, on the side of our natural life? Emphatically, that His strength may be "made perfect (or be perfected) in weakness." And what is His strength? "The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, *when he raised him from the dead*" (Eph. 1:19,20). It is resurrection might and life. The more spiritual a believer becomes, the more he will realize his dependence upon the life of God for all things. This will be true physically as in every other way.

The central principle of any "Divine healing" which is in truth of God and to spiritual purpose is Rom. 8:11, an energizing of the mortal body with resurrection life. This does not of necessity inevitably or invariably carry with it complete physical healing, but it does mean such a quickening as to make for a transcendence of the *weakness or infirmity which prevents a fulfilment of the will of God* in life or service. It means an accession of Divine life in our spirit so that we are enabled to do much more than is humanly or naturally possible. This life cannot be taken hold of and used by the flesh. Immediately there is a dropping down on to a natural level by one who has been led into a life of faith, there will be a

recrudescence of death. An atmosphere charged with the life of God is always a place of renewal, refreshing, and strengthening to him that is spiritual.

If Enoch was a type of the believers who will be translated that they shall not see death, then we must remember that "by *FAITH* Enoch was translated." What is the nature of this faith? It is the faith which depends upon Divine life for all things, and is therefore an abiding witness and testimony to the resurrection of Christ. Hence, as the Lord's coming draws near, we shall be forced to live exclusively by His life - "the life whereby Jesus conquered death." This is the life by which God's people have triumphed in all ages. A close study of the Old Testament will reveal that it was faith in resurrection life which brought the Divine vindication. "That they might obtain a better resurrection" was the motive which made them victorious in death and therefore over the authority of death. The ascendancy of spirit so markedly characteristic of New Testament believers is to be accounted for on the ground of a life within their spirit which could not see death, the life of Him Who "dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him," for "it was impossible that he should be holden of death."

Now it is important to remember that death is not only a law or a principle. It is that; but the Scriptures constantly make clear that behind the thing there is a person. Just as in giving eternal life the Lord gives Himself - for, said He, "I am the resurrection and the life" and it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" - so back of death is he "that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Conybeare translates that "the lord of death."

The great battle of Egypt which issued in the establishing of that which for all Old Testament times was pointed to as the classic illustration of the exercise of supreme Divine power, was not originally between Jehovah on the one hand and Pharaoh or the Egyptians on the other. The latter were involved, and were ultimately destroyed because in the presence of Divine revelation and manifestation they persisted in rebellion. The real battle was between Jehovah and "all the gods of Egypt" (Ex. 12:12), which gods were but the spiritual hierarchy of him who had ever made it his aim to be "like the Most High," and had assumed the role of "the god of this world." A right understanding of that story would make very clear that it was a conflict between the Lord of Life and the lord of death, and the Hebrews were only translated out of the kingdom of darkness and the authority of death because a lamb had shed its blood, and through death had figuratively destroyed him that had the power of death. That is the background of Calvary.

In His Cross Christ drew on Himself the whole hierarchy of evil, and went down under it to the bottom-most reach of its domain, and then, by reason of the life which could not be holden of death, He stripped off principalities and powers, broke through, and rose their conqueror, and in resurrection far above all rule and authority was the firstborn from the dead - the first and inclusive One of all who should be identified with Him. The final triumph of His Body will be the consummation of Rev. 12:11 - victory over the system and its power

by reason of the life of the risen Lord indwelling. If it be true that this is progressive, then it is the power of Satan as "the prince of this world" which is being broken by the life of Christ increasing within us; or to put it in a more useful way, the power of Satan can only be destroyed as we, through death, know Christ in the power of His resurrection and receive His risen life more and more.

In conclusion, let us point out that after His resurrection our Lord was, because of the peculiar nature of His resurrection state, no longer subject to natural limitations. Time and space had no more control of Him. The principle abides and applies now. When there is a living in the values and energy of resurrection life we are children of eternity and of the universe. Prayer touches the ends of the earth, and the significance of our being and doing is of universal and eternal dimensions; there are no limitations.

So then, beloved of God, the natural life is no longer a criterion; whether it be strong or weak it matters not. Its strength does not mean effectiveness in spiritual things, whether that strength be intellectual, moral, circumstantial, social, physical. Its weakness does not carry a handicap. We are called to live and serve only in His life, and it is the only efficiency, but the sure one. Then we must try to keep in mind that the Lord's purpose, in all that seems to be destructive of us, is to get us upon this plane which is in every sense supernatural.

Further, we must see to it that all the means whereby this life can be strengthened and increased are used to the full, and a clear discernment of the Body of Christ is of supreme account. This life is the life of the whole corporate Body, and the individual member can only have it in relation thereto. This subject is dealt with more fully elsewhere, but here it must be the closing word because we are dealing with incorporation into Christ, and this is Christ in His fullness as the Head; but not alone as Head, but as one Body. What is true of the Head must be true of the members. What is true of the Vine must be true of the branches. What is true of the Last Adam must be true of every member of His race. "Planted together in the likeness of his resurrection" said the Apostle (Rom. 6:5), and he prayed that it might be more and more experimental - "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection..." (Phil. 3:10).

This is truly the prayer of the Holy Spirit in the servant of Christ seeking to make real the great truth of John 5:21,25,26 -

"The hour... now is."

"The hour cometh."

CHAPTER 04

Ascension and Glory

While much emphasis is laid upon the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, it is not generally realized that His ascension is no less important as a truth basic to our life in Him and for His universal purpose. In the fuller unveilings of spiritual life in Christ which came progressively through the anointing of the Holy Spirit much is said, on the one hand, about our having been made to sit in the heavenlies in Christ, and, on the other hand, we are reminded that we are strangers and pilgrims here. This revelation interprets the whole Bible along a certain line, and the key-declaration to this sweep of the Word is that the seat and base of all life and work, the place of the pattern, purpose, and entire resource of our calling in Christ, is in the heavens.

There are two words which represent or signify two halves of one great truth - ascension and translation; these are complementary to each other. The one makes possible the other, and the other demands the one. Ascension is an act, conclusive and definite. Translation is a process culminating in a climax. When the Lord Jesus ascended up on high and was "received up" it was representative and relative, just as was His death and resurrection. As the representative of the many sons whom He would bring to glory, He immediately and definitely transferred from earth to heaven the source of spiritual life, the spring of spiritual being; and in fact everything that pertains unto salvation, sanctification, service, glory, is now in the heavens, and cannot be found in the earth.

From the point of being "born from above," everything implied and involved in both nature and purpose is out from above. An exquisite cameo of this is found in the eighty-seventh Psalm. The terms are typical or illustrative. Here the partiality of God is seen for the spiritual as against the carnal habitations. Then the things of glory are related to this spiritual city. Then the boasted nativities of men are reviewed: they boast in having been born in Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, or Cush. But transcending all boasts is His whose citizenship is of Zion and upon whom Zion's franchise has been conferred.

The Lamb's book of life looms into view, and the names are mentioned, and the all-inclusive realization of these heavenly citizens is that all their fountains are there. Theirs is a heavenly calling, life, vision, citizenship, walk, hope, country, kingdom, etc. One of the most marked things in the pre-ascension experiences of God's people is the failure of anything of this earth - though given of God - to satisfy the vision and expectation of His truly spiritually-minded people. Abraham had promise of a country and a city; he moved out with God, but it is quite clear that as his faith expanded, the fullest possibilities of realization on the earth failed to fulfil his hope and the promise. He came into the land but he was not at all satisfied that the promise was fulfilled; in fact, though there was blessing and increase he grew less

satisfied. The truth is that his spiritual life was expanding and with it his faith demanded something more than that which was of the earth. That to which he looked forward at first, as adequate to meet the expectation through promise, he came by closer fellowship with God to regard as altogether insufficient. This led him to a series of refusals and rejections of things of earthly glory. The Promised Land ultimately ceased to be for him a thing of earth, and so writers under the illumination of the same Spirit as was leading Abraham tell us that he looked for "a better country... a heavenly," and "a city... whose builder (architect) and maker is God." (Heb. 11:16,10). Placing over against this such passages as Matt. 3:9, John 8:56, Gal. 3:7, 4:26, Heb. 12:22, we are surely compelled to recognize that Abraham's vision became more and more "other-worldly" as his faith became clearer. Simultaneously with this throwing back of the horizon, and as a means to that end, everything of earth was taken down into death, to pass through and out on to resurrection ground by resurrection life. It was then a thing no longer of this earth but of the heavens. This applied to possessions, relationships, prospects, vision, promise, faith, service, capacity.

An important principle is here revealed as basic to all the accomplishments of God and to all effective life and service in fellowship with God. *WE MUST COME INTO EVERY DIVINE THING AS OUT FROM ABOVE, AND NOT FROM THE EARTH LEVEL.*

Such phrases as "taking up Christian work," "getting into Christian service," contain a very dangerous and false concept. Unless such would-be workers have had their own works (even for God) brought to death, and themselves also, any move into things which are related to God will result in one of three things - to be smashed by them, or to come sooner or later to deadlock as in a *cul-de-sac*, or to go on with a show and appearance of success, but really effecting nothing in any heavenly sense, the thing effected being of this world, though religious and well meant.

Moses undoubtedly had a heavenly revelation in Egypt. By illumination of spirit he saw that the poor, oppressed, crushed, distracted mob of Semites were the elect of God (Heb. 11:25). He further saw that the Cross as the reproach of Christ was the method of redemption (verse 26). Then he saw that sin, in his case, would be to retain the pleasurable advantages of this world in denial of that Cross and its objective. In the light of this he made his decision; he refused, he chose, he forsook, and feared not. But even when he had arrived at the position in his spirit, he had to learn the main lesson of his life, namely, that heavenly visions require heavenly instruments for their realization. He essayed to put his revelation into effect from the standpoint of some natural or earthly vantage ground. This jeopardized everything, brought confusion, delay, shame, and fear. He had to go out and be brought through discipline to his famous "I cannot," and then come into the situation as from above. The real effect was to have been taken out and up, and then to come down on to it as from above; for afterward Moses was a man linked with the throne of God. It has ever been thus. For patterns, commissions, and powers, a place of ascendancy has been the

Divine method. In "the patterns of things in the heavens" a mountain will do, but for the actual things a spiritual union with the ascended Lord is essential.

This can be traced in the case of Moses, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Paul, and others.

"Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me... (Ezek. 11:1, etc.) is a clause which implies the Divine order. This is not the elevation of the soul by imaginations, ecstasies, idealism, or mental visions. Such, as well as false or true presentations of great prospects, may be presented by the Devil. The Master refused the elevations and visions given by the enemy because the true prospect was only by the way of the Cross.

Paul called himself "a wise master-builder," but this in his actual language only meant one who had been allowed to look at the architect's plan and was working according to it. For this look he had been "caught up," but to be "in the Spirit" is always to be caught up. The Lord Jesus said much about being in heaven while on earth. "The Son of man who is in heaven" (John 3:13) "What he (the Son) seeth the Father doing... these the Son also doeth in like manner" (John 5:19) His spirit had a heavenly union by the Holy Spirit, and so He wrought. It is one thing to take even the Bible as a manual or textbook - a system of truth, teaching, practice, and order; it is quite another thing to see the eternal, spiritual principles behind the precepts, practices, and system. The one is to live and work according to the transmission of truth through the medium of human intelligence: that is, an infinite truth has been shaped in finite terms to make it intelligible to men. The other is to apprehend by a quickened and renewed spirit the infinite significance of the revelation. The transmission represents the human range, the spiritual revelation infinitely transcends this, and requires a heavenly mind - the mind of the Spirit as against the mind of the flesh.

Only such as have been made one with the ascended Christ have His mind and can effectively serve Him. In so many ways the fact, nature, and need of ascension-union with Christ are emphasized in the whole Bible and especially in the New Testament. He ascended with the keys of authority in His possession. As man and for man He had wrested the dominion from the prince of this world. As a mighty conqueror He was "received up." This victorious return was foreshadowed in the spirit of the Psalmist when he sang:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory will come in.... The Lord mighty in battle..." (Ps. 24:7,8).

If it is true that Christ has taken our humanity, redeemed, purged, sanctified, into the very throne of God, and is reproducing this corporate union of Himself with us and of ourselves with Himself in the Church which is His Body, then ascension union means that we now have a place in the place of His sovereignty: we are to have dominion in Him over principalities and powers. The safer way to state this is that His sovereignty functions - or is meant to function - through His Body and all its members.

There are other doors mentioned in this connection besides the "everlasting doors." There are the "gates of Hades," which mean the counsels and schemes and judgments of hell. These are represented as being against the Church. It is therefore said that, because of the heavenly union with and in Him Who has passed triumphantly through the everlasting doors, these other "gates" shall not prevail, because His sovereignty is in the Church and the Church is in His sovereignty. Not to a Jewish group as such, or to the nucleus of an earthly kingdom related to any one age, but to the nucleus of His Church He addressed those words about the building of that Church and its ascendancy over the counsels of hell (Matt. 16:18). To them as such He also said, "Behold I have given you authority... over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19); this, in the light of His Cross which was the abiding background of all His utterances and actions. There can be no resting of the Holy Spirit in and upon believers except as incorporation in Christ crucified, buried, risen, and ascended has taken place. For Elisha to receive the "double portion" of his master's spirit he must pass through Jordan with him and be with him in the place of ascension.

It is ever thus. The Holy Spirit mediates the sovereignty of the Head to and through the Body, and for this "holding fast the Head" heavenly union is essential. The Church is a heavenly body, not an earthly society, institution, organization. The ecclesiastical systems of this world which call themselves "the Church" and "the churches" are too often a grotesque caricature. There are no sects, denominations, "branches of the Church," with God. Only one Church exists in the mind and interest of God, and that "the church of the first-born," and all this other welter is because there has been an attempt made again and again to set up something for God on this earth as of the earth. God is not in this, but is leaving it to compass its own end in confusion, or proceed apace in its delusion. He is quietly, without sound of axe or hammer, putting His elect stones into a spiritual temple, a heavenly house. Only such as have the vantage ground of the heavenly places will see this, discountenance the false, and find full blessedness in doing what the Father is doing.

We now proceed to say a little about that half of this truth implied in the word "translation." At the outset we said that "translation is a process culminating in a climax." The climax is, of course, the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The whole course of Christian experience when wrought out by God is one of progressive transition or translation from earthlies to heavenlies. Faith is the principle of translation, and its very nature demands a basis which is spiritual and not of the senses, which is heavenly and not of the earth. The Lord's dealings with His people have ever resulted in their losing all earthly ground of confidence and assurance and being made utterly dependent upon Himself.

Faith always brings us into precarious and difficult situations. Faith always demands a letting go of things seen and temporal. Faith threatens, and carries out its threat, to bewilder and confound our natural judgments, wisdom, acumen, hope, confidence, and security. Faith never fails to cut the ties of our natural safety, and dry up the springs of our human

resource. All this must be in order to open up an entire system of heavenly fullness. God makes revelation indispensable and His own heavenly realities absolutely essential to existence. Thus He meets us in some challenge and demand, a crisis is precipitated, a step in the obedience of faith is required, and when it is taken it is a step upward which gives us some spiritual vantage-ground where we see what we did not know before. Thus by a succession of upward steps in faith we are having the faith of God's elect wrought in us in preparation for that climax in translation. It is corporate faith in the whole Body of Christ - proving it to be what it really is, a heavenly Body - that will bring about the advent of Christ. "The Second Coming of Christ," is not some merely historical event in a Divine timetable of prophecy. It is the climax of faith in the Body of Christ, which faith has severed that Body absolutely from the world and merely earthly things, even though they be religious things and systems. The obedience of faith increases capacity for apprehending the spiritual, eternal, and unseen principles of God's eternal purpose, and thus makes possible the effecting of that purpose. Surely this is the principle running through Hebrews 11 as a summary of the nature and course of faith. But it is "one faith," even "the faith of the Son of God." This faith is a mighty energy, spiritually militant, and the means by which the battles of the Lord have ever been fought. Thus it is that the final great conflict with the Satanic hierarchy will be brought to a victorious issue by the faith of the Christ triumphant in His Church (Rev. 12:11). Thus shall the sovereignty of the *HEAVENS* be established over the "gates" (counsels) of hell by the Church, and the earth will feel the impact of that triumphant faith.

This kind of translation faith is rare and few there are who will pay its price. Well might the Lord ask if He shall find it on the earth at His coming. Let it be emphasized once more that the transferring of all things to the heavenlies, so that we are feeling more and more the strangeness of strangers and the homelessness of pilgrims here, and at-homeness in spiritual and heavenly things, is the natural course of a true life in God. When the climax comes and we are finally translated, it will be no great change for our inner man; there will be no awkwardness or feeling of being strange and out of place. It will be but the last phase of the spiritual journey where the glory breaks upon us, and like Enoch, "we are not, for God has taken us."

It only remains to be said that this is the path of, and to, the glory.

The glory is always heavenly glory. Ultimately it will be manifested in a perfected humanity. At present it is secretly within the spirit of the believer, and with each fresh step up in faith, that which cannot be defined to others becomes more wonderful to him. It would be a poor description of the Divine glory to say that it is incorruption and incorruptibleness, perfection of understanding, perfection of harmoniousness, perfection of capacity, perfection of graciousness. But almost imperceptibly the movement of faith and the action of grace are leading on to this. The incorruptible seed which makes possible the incorruptible body is

already in the sons of God by faith. There is an opening of the eyes of their understanding, and heavenly things for them are much more real than the things seen. There is a "peace which passeth understanding" realized in deep crises, which is the fruit of a harmony in the will with God's will. (The word "peace" would always be better translated "harmony.") So also spiritual capacity is that which transcends the limitations of time and space, and which bounds the universe in effects and issues. And it scarcely need be said that the graciousness of Divine love, compassion, tenderness, considerateness, humility, etc., are the glory of God.

These things, however, do not touch all that His glory means. Perfection of character, capacity and service, bring perfection of satisfaction. This is but the basis of His glory. Here we have to stop short. This glory can only be known in spirit and not portrayed in words. We remind ourselves that it is written that we have been called "unto his eternal glory" (1 Pet. 5:10), and that our salvation is "with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10) and that the light affliction "worketh... an exceeding weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

Thus, as we have been crucified together with Him, buried with Him, raised with Him, so we are ascended and glorified together with Him.

May we have grace that every movement of God by which He would make our ascension-union manifest and experimentally real may find an "Amen" in our hearts, cost what it may in the uprooting of our lives from earth.

He would have us see the heavens open always and the representative and inclusive "Son of man" in the glory *AS US*, even while we are on the earth; everything in ministry here moving from and to the heavens.

With these heavenly truths thus before us let us find the meaning and force of familiar exhortations, such as:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth... but lay up... treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19,20).

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is.... Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth" (Col. 3:1,2).

If we are to appear with Christ in glory we must have a life already hid with Christ in God, and ourselves be dead to things on the earth.

"For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).