

THE GREAT KING

AND OTHER ADDRESSES

GIVEN IN NEW ZEALAND

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By

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*Where quotations from Scripture differ from
the Authorised Version, they are from the
New Translation, by J. N. Darby.*

THE GREAT KING

Matthew 4. 1-end ; chap. 5. 33-35 ;

Revelation 5. 6-10

I HAVE in mind, dear brethren, to speak a little of the Lord as set forth in Matthew 5, as "the great King." The Lord says of Jerusalem, that it is "the city of the great King," and I believe that it will be of value to us to see more clearly the majesty of Christ. The apostle Peter says "we were eye-witnesses of his majesty." While of course, the privilege of the apostles was peculiar, the Spirit of God would help us in some way on that line, so that we may have an inward consciousness by the Holy Spirit of the majesty of our Lord.

In this democratic day, we have little idea of kingship according to God. The real glory and majesty of a king has largely disappeared from men's minds, and while we can thank God for a monarchy, we realize how the true glory of the position has largely disappeared: it has become a formal thing shorn of much of its dignity and majesty. Kingship is of God: God Himself is King; as the apostle says "Now unto the King eternal . . . the only wise God," 1 Tim. 1. 17, and the prophet Jeremiah speaks of God as "King of eternity," Jer. 10. 10, in contrast to kings of time. God is also spoken of as "King of heaven," Dan.

4. 37; heaven being His throne, and earth being His footstool. God has displayed in the Person of Christ in manhood, His own thoughts of kingship, and the Lord Himself is the great King. One desires that what Isaiah speaks of might be true of us, "thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty," Isa. 33. 17.

God is working at the present time in view of a coming day, when those that are Christ's shall be made "unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth," Rev. 5. 10. We are to be *made* kings, it is a process with us,—not so, with the blessed Lord, He was *born* King; every kingly feature was inherent in Him; nothing I need hardly say had to be made for all the features of a king were there. It is only a matter of time and all will be displayed, He will be heralded publicly as King of kings. But with us it is peculiarly the work of Christ to *make* us kings. The Lord uses His power and wisdom to *make* us kings. He said to Peter, "Follow me and I will *make* you fishers of men." He has power to make His people what He would have them to be. He will make us kings as well as priests, and if we are to be made kings, we must know something of what is true of a king.

I will just refer briefly to Matthew 4, as presenting to us some of the kingly features of Christ. In the temptations we see kingly character in evidence in the Lord Jesus.

In Ecclesiastes we read "Where the word of a king is, there is power." Think of the power of that word, as the Lord said, "Get thee hence, Satan," Matt. 4. 10, so that we read, "Then the devil leaveth him." Who before had ever been equal to that? This is the first feature of the King in Matthew, the Great King,—nothing could force the Lord back. We read that the lion is the strongest among beasts, and "turneth not away for any," Prov. 30. 30: how this feature was seen in the Lord. He entered upon the path of the will of God, and nothing could ever induce the Lord to turn back. As tempted of the devil what power was shown in our Lord Jesus: we have very little conception of the power of the devil. It says "the devil," a title which represents him in all his awful character; "the devil" speaks of what is dreadful; but it was in this character that the Lord met him. Although He has to meet such a being He is not diverted. He does not turn back, He is prepared to meet everything in the path.

The next test is hunger. What a power this is! What have men not done because of hunger—what restraints have been broken down—what evil has been perpetrated through hunger. In the book of Proverbs, Agur is recorded to have said, "Give me neither poverty nor riches," and as to poverty he

says "lest I be poor and steal and outrage the name of my God," Prov. 30. It breaks down restraint—moral restraint. It says of the Lord here, that "He was afterward an hungered." But that did not divert Him from God. Even after forty days it did not divert the Lord from the pathway of subjection to God.

Then the devil says "Cast thyself down,"—behind the temptation was the thought of publicity, to let it be seen that He was specially cared for by God. Publicity has marvellous power. We have only to look into our own hearts to see that. How much man will do for a little publicity—a little recognition—it is a marvellous power. Let us look into our own heart and see how the flesh loves it. How often has it turned a Christian aside, diverting him from the path of God's will. But nothing turned the Lord aside from the path; "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" never turned back! The devil showed the Lord all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, seeking to use this as a means of diverting him, saying, "If thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine." Look over the history of the last few years and see how many the world has diverted. How many have sacrificed righteousness, have sacrificed the path of the will of God for a little glory here: they have not been kingly and have

been turned aside. Not so the Lord, nothing can or will deflect Him from the will of God—He is indeed a King. As being in the consciousness of His majesty, we would be strengthened in our souls, so that come what may, be it hunger, publicity, the glory of this world, the devil himself, we shall not turn back, but will be qualified for our place as kings, with Him, who is King of kings.

It says that the Lord went down to Capernaum, and there we have another feature of majesty, there we see other expressions of the glory of the great King. It says "the people that sat in darkness, saw a great light," a remark suggesting the shining of the sun. The sun is one of the greatest figures of majesty and rule. If you want an idea of majesty, get up early and see the sun rise—that is majesty in so far as it may be seen in the creation. How it brings in order and rule, and warmth and life and blessing—that is truly kingly. And there is no limit to the power of the sun—the sun has an absolute monarchy.

So the Lord went down to Capernaum, and there He shone so that the people who sat in darkness saw a great light. God made all the lights; the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night; He made the stars also. Jesus went to Capernaum and shone. He brought to the hearts

of men the light of heaven, the control and influence of heaven; He brought it right down into the darkness. It tells us in Matthew 17, that "his face did shine as the sun,"—His blessed face radiated the light of heaven there on the holy mount. How our hearts warm under the influence of Christ, as we come under heavenly influence as He is near.

You say, How did He shine? John says that the "life was the light of men," John 1. 4. Many of us think words are the light, but the scripture says, the *life* was the light of men. It is not what we may say, not in speaking, but what we are in *life* that is the testimony. I sometimes wonder what some of us understand by "the testimony." Testimony is expressed in the life of the Lord's people. As we are formed by the light, it becomes life in us, and in the power of what is living, we are able to shine, so that in measure with us, the life is the light. The psalmist could say, "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King." All around was moral darkness, but in Jesus here "the life was the light of men." "The people that sat in darkness saw a great light," the kingly majesty of Christ shone out in Capernaum. It is said in Proverbs 20, "A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment, scattereth away all evil

with his eyes." How true characteristically this was of Christ!

Following this, the Lord meets Peter and Andrew. They were fishing, and He says, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him." Think of it for a moment! Two men fishing, and the Lord says, "Follow me"—and they left everything. It means that the King has spoken. It says, "Where the word of a king is, there is power," Eccles. 8. 4. They followed the Lord because of the commanding power of His word; when He speaks there is authority. We read that "He taught them as one having authority." Then He meets James and John and says to them, Follow me—"He called them, and they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him." What power must have resided in these words of Christ, to make these four men leave their occupations, and two of them to leave their father as well, and follow the Lord.

I wonder whether we have all heard the same powerful voice calling us to follow the Lord, to leave our occupations, I do not mean literally in this day, for other scriptures make it perfectly clear that we are to work with our hands,—but the Lord would so speak to our hearts, that we should no longer be *controlled* by our occupations. Perhaps we

give the fragments of our lives to the Lord, things that would answer to the sacrifices in Malachi, the broken and maimed, but the Lord would so speak to us that He would govern us, and as a result, our occupations would no longer control us, but all would be under the control of the King. Natural relationship is the thing which holds many of God's people—they are under the domination of the natural. The Lord called James and John to leave their father as well as their nets, to come out from under the domination of their occupation and relationships, and come under the control of Himself as King. It is a feature of kingly power that when the Lord speaks, His word has authority.

Then you come to the 5th chapter: "And when he was set his disciples came unto him." In this chapter the Lord is virtually sitting upon the throne, and He proceeds to legislate. It is God's idea of a king, that he should legislate, not that the people should do so. God's King legislates; He makes the laws of the kingdom, and it is legislation which will abide; which provides, not for mere legal obedience, but obedience from the heart. He looks into the hearts—into the spring of what is done; we have a King who can do that! When the Lord legislates He takes account of the springs within. No mere man ever legislated like that.

In referring to these thoughts as seen in Christ, I want to point out, dear brethren, that these are the features the Lord would form in us, so that we might be qualified to take up kingly rule. The elders in Revelation 4 and 5, have thrones, they have crowns, all speaking of kingly character. In Revelation 19, we read that the Lord has "A name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." The Lord Jesus is the King of kings. How readily would the twenty-four elders in Revelation yield that title to the Lord Jesus! If they are raised to a kingly position and glory, sitting upon thrones and crowned, they delight to ascribe all praise to Him who sits upon *the* throne, saying, "Thou art worthy . . . and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth," Rev. 5. 9, 10. When the elders in Revelation see the "great King" they fall down before Him who sits upon the throne, and cast their crowns before the throne and acknowledge the supremacy of Christ. They have been made kings—they have had the Lord Jesus before their hearts, they have understood His kingly features, and now having been formed after Him, they are made kings, able to sit upon thrones, round about His throne.

Stephen was a king: as we see him go out by way of death, we see a man in kingly character—one who will come out in the

coming day as a king. We see him in the character of a lion, nothing will turn him back. His murderers gnashed upon him with their teeth, they rushed upon him and stoned him, but Stephen did not turn back. The Lord would have us to set forth kingly features such as were seen in Himself. Though Stephen might die, he went on to the end. They saw his face; it was something like the face of Jesus, radiating the very light of heaven—"like the face of an angel." He was radiant in life with the very light of heaven. People saw it expressed, not in words only, but in the very life and being of Stephen; there was the light of God shining in the darkness, and they could not resist the wisdom and power with which he spoke. He spoke like a king, which indeed he was morally.

Paul was another king; he says to the Corinthians, "I would to God ye did reign that we also might reign with you," 1 Cor. 4. 8. The apostle recognised that kingly dignity belonged to the saints of God although *the time* for reigning had not yet come. He looked forward to the reigning time, that he, and all the saints might reign together. Read the second epistle to the Corinthians and see what he had to meet! See what power he had! He could say to Timothy at the end, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Whatever came out against him he

never turned back. He was like a king and like a lion; and, dear brethren, he was an illuminator—think how he shone, “holding forth the word of life.” He expressed in his life the light of heaven, and his word was with power. He said to Timothy, “Thou hast fully known my . . . manner of life.” How brightly he shone, for instance, in the prison of Philippi.

These are kingly features which the Lord would develop in us by the Spirit. The elders represent this great thought secured in the saints, and one would desire for all, that we should make room for this great work of God, in forming us in view of our place of dignity and rule, as made “kings and priests to our God.” If we keep our eye upon the King, it will deliver us from the lawlessness of the day in which we are. The One we have as King is supreme. “To us there is one Lord,” and may He grant that we may in some spiritual sense, be eye-witnesses of His majesty.

THE DESIRE OF GOD TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Psalm 14. 2, 3; *Jeremiah* 9. 23, 24;

Mark 8. 14, 15

ONE has felt that it might help us in our spiritual exercises if we took account of the desire of God to be understood. We know in our own affairs that we all have that longing, and how we feel it when misunderstood. How touching is the word in *Psalm* 14, "The LORD looked down from heaven"—that is from the height of His sanctuary, from that altitude from which He sees everything and everyone, God "looked down." He was deliberately searching to see "if there were any that did understand, and seek God." The pleasure of God in finding a man who in some measure understood, is evidenced in relation to Abel. It says, "By faith we understand," and God took account of Abel as one who had understanding. He may not have understood much, but he understood something, for he offered to God what God could accept; behind his offering there was evidence that he understood God in some measure, and what was suitable to God. Enoch also understood, for it says that he walked with God. How wonderful!—for 300 years he walked with God, so that in looking down from heaven, God would see in Enoch one who gave Him pleasure, and

to whom He could unfold His secrets. God did not hide from Enoch what He was doing, and later we are told that "he was not; for God took him." God had found in Enoch a man who was pleasurable to Him, and He took him.

Then of Abraham it is said that he was the friend of God, not only that God was Abraham's Friend, but Abraham was God's friend. God loves to have friends who understand Him. A friend *understands*, so the Lord says to His disciples, "I have called you friends." A servant does not know what his master does, but a friend knows and understands. Thus right down the line of faith there were men whom God found in His searching, as He looked down to see if there were any who did understand and seek God. He found these men of faith who in some degree understood.

When the Lord Jesus was here in manhood every longing of the heart of God was met. There was one blessed Man here who did understand, and as God looked down from heaven there comes the word, "This is my beloved Son in whom I have found my delight." God had found it! The pleasure of God was ministered to perfectly,—because a son understands.

You can see that with Abraham and Isaac as they go on together. As they went, what

holy intercourse there was between them. "My father," says Isaac, "behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" "My son, God will provide himself a lamb. . . . So they went both of them together." What an understanding there was between Abraham and Isaac,—so that when Isaac is bound and placed on the altar, there is no evidence of a struggle, or of any resistance, there was complete understanding; figurative of that blessed journey of God's beloved Son, when in the perfect understanding of the Father's will, He came here to die. The Lord could say to the Jews, "I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you," John 8. 55.

If God is pleased to hide His things from the wise and prudent of this world, and reveal them to babes, the Son says, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," Matt. 11. 26. And if at the end of His service here, the cup may not pass from Him—that awful cup,—He is able to say, in perfect submission, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done," Matt. 26. 42. Blessed understanding!—seen perfectly in Christ alone. What delight that ministered to God!—and God desires to extend it.

The Lord's service as the Mediator of the new covenant has in view the extension of

the knowledge of God, so that there should be myriads of hearts that understand and know Him. The apostle John takes up the thought and says: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John 5. 20. He says, "We know the Son of God is come," and having come, He causes the knowledge of God to enter into myriads of hearts; He gives us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. Jeremiah tells us that is the thing to glory in: "let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me." What are riches? he says, do not glory in them. What is might?—or wisdom? The only thing to be desired is to understand and know God.

If God in His wisdom reduces our riches, and our resources, it is only that He may give us that wherein we may glory, that we should understand and know Him. Instead of our hearts living in the things that are passing away, and making them our all, He would bring before us that blessed One in whom we have an understanding and something in which to glory. The apostle Paul says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us," 2 Cor. 4. 7. The

treasure was the knowledge of God; it was that in which the apostle himself gloried.

Paul said to the Corinthians, "some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame," 1 Cor. 15. 34. In this day, after the Son of God has come, it is a shame not to know God! One speaks humbly, for how little, alas, we know God, but he says, "I speak this to your shame." One has come, who is the Declarer of God, the Son of God, making God known, "the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John 1. 18. It is therefore a shame, especially to Christians, if they have not the knowledge of God; but as having this treasure, we have that in which we can glory—"Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me," Jer. 9. 24.

Now I would like to refer to this thought as seen in the blessed Lord Jesus Himself. What touching words we read in Mark 8. 21, "How is it that ye do not understand?" He might raise that question with many of us. God brought the beasts of the field to Adam, and he named them, and whatever he called them, that was their name, but it says, "for Adam there was not found an help meet for him." Think of the loneliness of Adam at that moment! There were beasts of the field, cattle, and fowl of the air, and he could

recognise their various characteristics, and name them; but for himself, there was no help meet found. Adam was alone on the earth, for there was not a living creature that understood him, or could share his thoughts. God Himself had said it was not good for the man to be alone; in His consideration for His creature, God would not allow the loneliness to continue. Think of the desolation of heart that would be felt, if one were alone in New Zealand! Yet Adam was alone on the earth, with not one soul to commune with him or share his thoughts. And so God says, "I will make him an help meet for him," Gen. 2. 18.

With this in view God began another work, different from anything else that had gone before, it says He "builded a woman, and brought her to the man." And Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." He found one that could understand him and share his thoughts, and with whom he could commune. Thus in holy manhood, the Lord Jesus was here alone. We can understand the loneliness of Christ; though He had the twelve disciples, and we know how greatly He appreciated them and their companionship, for He said, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations," Luke

22. 28. He would reward them for that, as He said, "I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me." Yet when we look into things closely, we can see that the Lord was alone in many respects; He was alone, for He was misunderstood, even by His disciples.

The incident we have read in Mark shows this. The Lord had taken five loaves and two fishes, and had fed 5,000, and they had gathered up twelve hand-baskets full of the fragments; and again, He had taken seven loaves and a few small fishes, and had fed 4,000. They had witnessed all this, yet when He speaks about the leaven of the Pharisees, that awful deadening influence which deadens and destroys the real value of everything that is of God, they say, "It is because we have no bread," Mark 8. 16. They had but one loaf, and they thought He meant they needed bread. So the Lord says, "How is it that ye do not understand?"

Think again of the Lord's love for little children. No one ever loved them as He did; He would take them into His arms and bless them and put His hands upon them, and identify Himself with them, but the disciples drove them away and bade them depart. They did not understand the Lord, and He rebuked them for what they did. Then think of the Lord on the lake; He said, "Let us

go to the other side." Think of all He had said, and of all the power they had witnessed, and yet when He went into the hinder part of the ship and slept, they are full of fear. They cry, "Master we perish!" They do not understand Him.

The Lord takes them on to the holy mount, where there is to be a display of His glory; when His face will shine as the sun, and His raiment become white as the light, when there is to be "such a voice"—a voice never heard before, disclosing what He is to the Father,—and it says "they were heavy with sleep"! They do not understand. He takes them into the garden of Gethsemane where He was to face the question of that cup, where His whole soul is being poured out in sorrow: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death,"—but He comes and finds them sleeping—He is alone.

God had said, "It is not good that man should be alone," and the Lord Jesus goes into death; answering in that sense to what is presented in figure in Adam, when the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon him. That really explains the present position in one view of it; primarily the deep sleep refers to the Lord's death, but I believe that it also covers the whole of this present period, when publicly, the Lord is absent and unseen, when there is no evidence of His moving

in a public way. The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and so the Lord has gone out of sight, for close on two thousand years, while God by the Spirit is building a woman, for the assembly—the church—is taken out of Christ.

Building is a work of time; it is done little by little, not in a moment. God may command the seas to swarm with living creatures, but that is not building: the assembly—the woman—is built, and little by little the structure is added to, until there is a vessel formed which is soon to be presented to Christ, when He will be able to recognise that which is of Himself, just as Adam recognised that Eve was of himself in saying, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man." So the apostle John hears the word, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," Rev. 21. 9, and he was shown "that great city, the holy Jerusalem"—the city "whose builder and maker is God."

The great present work of the Spirit of God is to form livingly in our souls that which will enable us to understand Christ; that we should be material for the building, by the work of God. The city is seen prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, and to all eternity she will understand,

and enter into the longings and desires of the heart of Christ. She will also have her part in the coming world, and from her will shine out that which has its origin in God Himself, for "the glory of God has enlightened it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." The source of its light is God. God is there. "The city had no need of the sun . . . for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof."

I am sure the Lord would help us to make room in our souls for the work of the Spirit of God, so that we may understand His desires, that when the day of display comes, there will be seen that which corresponds to Christ, as Eve did to Adam, in the type. The Lord will have a companion that understands His own heart. It will involve on our side, deep exercises and the constant judging of what is unsuitable to Him, but how well worth while it is to be formed in the features of the true bride, so that what comes into display may be truly what is of Himself, as formed in us now by the work of the Spirit.

The Lord is extending the knowledge of God, knowledge that is yet to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. As we look out on the sea, how completely the waters cover the whole area. Whatever there may be beneath, the waters cover all; and the Lord

will cover the earth with the knowledge of God—the coming world will be enveloped in it. As God says through Jeremiah, “they shall all know me”—this while specially true of Israel will be characteristic of men in that day.

If Adam and Eve had acted according to their knowledge of God what an answer they would have given to the serpent; they would have cast his lie in his teeth as he brought forward his misrepresentation of God. In the eternal condition yet to be brought to pass every lie will be outside—every false thought of God that has ever intruded into the universe—outside with all liars. The whole scene is to be filled with those who understand and know God, those who respond to Him.

God is bringing many sons to glory. Sonship in the divine mind involves sympathy, intelligence, and an understanding of God and of His love; and the great blessing of sonship in varying degree is going to spread to every family, Eph. 3. 15. “In my Father’s house are many mansions”—abodes—suggests the final thought connected with the Father’s house; there will be many abodes, where the many families all knowing and loving God, will have their dwelling places. But the Lord’s special word to the assembly is “I go to prepare a place for *you*.”

The Lord help us to take account of the desires of God. I would bring before your hearts the desire God has to be understood, and the intense longing of the heart of Christ to be understood. The work of the Spirit to-day is to give a present and eternal answer to those longings.

May God grant that we may be contributing a definite part to that now.

RIVERS

Exodus 7. 16-25; *chap.* 8. 1-7; *Jeremiah* 12. 5, 6;
Psalms 65. 9; *Revelation* 9. 13-16;
Ezekiel 47. 1

IN these scriptures we have four rivers presented. A river suggests resource, influence, and the means of fertility,—often coming as it does from distant sources. God is pleased to use the physical features of His creation to convey spiritual ideas. The sun speaks of Christ in His supremacy. A rock speaks of stability and permanency. Rain sometimes suggests blessing as coming from heaven. Wind suggests unseen spiritual forces either for good or evil.

In our first scripture we have Egypt and its river brought before us. Egypt owes everything to its river. It is one of the few countries that does not depend upon rain for its fertility, and generally it represents the world as a system with Satan as its god and prince. Its attitude is one of entire independence of God, and disregard of heavenly blessing. Babylon is a type of the religious world in all its confusion. Sodom represents the world in its corruption. Tyre is the commercial world, and Satan himself is referred to typically, as the king of Tyre in *Ezekiel* 28.

The river of Egypt represents that great source from which the world derives its

sustenance and which feeds its pleasures; pleasures, indeed, which the scripture speaks of as "the pleasures of sin for a season."

In Exodus 7 and 8, we see how God brought judgment upon Egypt so that its moral character might be disclosed to His people the children of Israel, before they left it: judgment always has this in view. This is not mere history, but is written for us upon whom the ends of the ages have come; that we might judge every worldly principle in our own hearts. The Lord, in John 17, did not ask the Father that His own should be taken out of the world, but that they might be kept from the evil that is in it. Very soon we shall actually leave this scene, for we are I believe on the eve of our translation to heaven, but before this takes place, God in His goodness is disclosing to us the true character of the world.

Pharaoh had sought to engulf the male children in Egypt's river, and had he succeeded, then all public testimony for God—which is the idea of the male—would be brought to an end! In one way or another, parents who have faith in God, are made to realize Satan's determination at all costs to have the children ensnared in this world's pleasures, amusements and pursuits. Salvation for the children lies now as then, in hiding them, as did Moses' parents. He was hidden with them for three

months, and then later put into the ark of bulrushes in the sedge of the river bank. Godly parents to-day would seek to hide their children as far as possible from the world. The river of Egypt may appear to contain pure water and to provide refreshment, but God would let us know that morally it is nothing but death, for blood means death. The river turned into blood is to teach us this!

Alas, that many of God's people turn to novels, and the wireless, etc., and each time they thus drink of Egypt's river, they drink of death. This explains why so many believers lose their spiritual vigour, they are morally at the point of death. The self-willed course of many who disregard the wishes of parents or of their fellow believers, proves that they have been drinking into the death-dealing river of Egypt. How different did Israel find the pure water which flowed from the smitten rock, speaking to us of the living refreshment of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven as a direct result of the death of Christ!

The next feature connected with Egypt's river is the frogs. Unclean spirits are likened to frogs in Revelation 16. 13. What unclean influences issue from this world's sources, permeating all that men rest in and feed upon. Wireless in men's houses is not merely for information as to the weather and the

markets, but is one of the means by which Satan succeeds in flooding their houses with worldly influences. The frogs of Egypt's river speak of the uncleanness of man after the flesh in God's sight, and in every sphere of man's life this is seen, as the self-will and unbridled lust of man is allowed liberty. The frogs covered the whole land of Egypt.

Now to turn to the river of Jordan in Jeremiah 12. This, as you know, was another great river, dividing the wilderness from the land of Canaan, and clearly typifies death. The question is raised with Jeremiah, "What wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?" What would he do? What would *we* do? Our minds travel back to the moment when Jordan overflowed all its banks—when Christ as typified in the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth, went into death. He is thus presented in John's gospel. Death swelled its floods against Him,—the accumulated force of the enemy's power was arrayed against Christ, and death, that mighty weapon wielded by Satan, spent all its power against Him. Until Christ broke the power of death, it was in Satan's power, and as such it was met by Christ. Death in all its mighty force had overflowed like the tide of Jordan, as Christ, the true Ark, went into death; but Jordan was driven back, "The sea saw it and fled, Jordan was driven back," Ps. 114. 3.

The power that was inherent in Christ drove back the flood-tide of death as far as the city of Adam; that is, to its very source.

Thus a way through death has been made by Christ, for the people of God. And as Stephen faced death and passed through in triumph, so all God's people are privileged to regard death as a defeated foe; and should we be called upon to face it actually, we can pass over in the strength of the One who has made a way through for us.

The next river, is the river of God, which is full of water. It is here, for it is said to enrich the earth. Its blessed tide is to be known by the people of God who have learned to turn away from the rivers of Egypt. What holy streams of refreshment God provides for His beloved people while still on earth. No need for any to thirst, still less for any to turn back in heart to Egypt. The river of God is full of water; there is no possibility of exhausting its boundless resources. A beloved brother remarked, "My thimble full of need, will never drain the ocean." If any Christian is thirsty or unsatisfied, in soul, it is because he is not drinking of the river of God.

How then can I find this river? The scripture reads, "Thou visitest the earth, thou waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God which is full of water," Ps. 65. 9. The

river of God is the result of divine visitations. The greatest of these visitations when God visited the earth in a permanent way, was at the incarnation, when "the Word became flesh." In spite of the refusal of man, God visited it again, in the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is said "Thou greatly enrichest it"—think of the divine enrichment consequent on the coming of the Spirit. Thus in the blessed river of God, we have abundance of wealth and blessing for the whole earth, all available as we pray. Communion with Christ at once gives you liberty of access to the river of God. You have but to pray. Dear young believer, when you feel thirsty and dissatisfied in soul, do you turn to a novel or the wireless?—or do you speak to God? If you turn to Him, the living refreshment of the river of God will flood your soul, and your tiny vessel,—for of course you could not yourself contain the river of God,—will not only be filled, but will have abundance for others around, as the Lord indicates in John 7. 38.

In Revelation 22, the river is spoken of as "the river of water of life." It flows "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," suggesting that where the rule and authority of God are owned and bowed to, the river of God becomes available to men. We receive the Spirit on this principle—He gives the

Holy Spirit "to them that obey him," Acts 5, 32. This river is said to be "clear as crystal," no defiling element and no corrupting influence are in that river.

Another presentation of the river of God is given to us in Ezekiel 47; it is seen there in relation to the house of God. It is said there to flow out "from under the threshold of the house." This points typically to the position of the people of God here in this world, for consequent upon the descent of the Holy Spirit they constitute the house of God, and issuing from among them is the living influence of the river of God, John 7. 38. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee," Ps. 84;—they are enriched by the river of God in all its blessed refreshment, it is known by the people of God, those who, as pleasurable to God afford in this world, the conditions suitable to God's house. It cannot be known in relation to any other house. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High," Ps. 46. 4. That is the way scripture refers to the place whence the river proceeds, from under the threshold of the house.

Lastly, there is the great river Euphrates. This is connected with the age-old barrier which God has providentially maintained between the East and the West. But at the

end of this present dispensation, and we stand at its very end to-day—God will as a part of His judgment on Christendom for its apostasy from Christ, loose the angels that for so long have been bound at the river Euphrates.

We have already seen the introduction from the East of such fearful influences of evil as Spiritism, Theosophy, etc., which have obtained so strong a hold upon Christendom consequent upon the displacement of Christ, and the Spirit of God. As the house of Christendom becomes empty, owing to the Spirit of God being denied His place, the demons return with seven-fold power, and they are rapidly occupying the house. See Matthew 12. 43-45. In very many ways it is plain that the way of the kings of the East is being prepared, though at present there is restraint consequent upon the presence here of the Spirit of God and the people of God. As the apostle says, "Ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he that letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." Thus we are plainly on the threshold of the close of the present dispensation.

May we be delivered from the corruption of the river of this world, and drink deeply into the river of God!

PARTNERSHIP

Zechariah 13. 7; *Ephesians* 2. 19; *1 Peter* 5. 1-4;
Philemon 1, 2, 23-25

IN alluding to these scriptures, I want to call attention to the various ways in which we are bound together, and share things in common. There is a great partnership existent, beloved brethren, and one has felt that while we maintain what is distinctive,—as for instance, the relative position of the man and the woman, and the responsibilities that are properly local,—the Lord would help us to realize that there is a very great deal that we share together in a universal way. One feels with oneself the tendency to be extreme in one way or the other.

Partnership in the conflicts and limitations of the testimony mark the closing moment; and I would like to dwell a little on the partnership that exists amongst the people of God. Though the word is not used in scripture it is implied in such expressions as fellow-citizens, fellow-labourers, fellow-soldiers, and fellow-prisoners, and then, last of all, there is the word in Peter referring to the elders, in which the apostle speaks of himself as a fellow elder.

I am sure we would not overlook the fact that in some respects it pleases God to put people and things in grades; and so it says in connection with the twelve, "first Simon, who

is called Peter." They were not all on the one level though they were all apostles. The first was Peter by the Lord's appointment. So when you come to the gifts it says, "first apostles, secondarily prophets," etc., and the apostle asks, "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?" showing that there is diversity in gift. Then too, in relation to responsibility: that which the Lord attached to Ephesus was not that of Smyrna; and the responsibility of Pergamos was not that of Thyatira, each local assembly having its own responsibility. The Lord has called attention to that, but on the other hand, we need to see that there is a very great deal in which we are all partners, and it is on that line that I wish to speak to you.

First of all, I would like to speak of the Lord Jesus as God speaks of Him through the prophet, saying, "the man that is my fellow saith the Lord of hosts." There is the side from which He is viewed as in subjection to God, and in which He takes a subordinate *place*, and one of relative inferiority to the Father, as He said, "My Father is greater than I." Indeed, the scripture says that He was made "a little lower than (that is inferior to) the angels for the suffering of death." I know some do not like the word inferior, but the Spirit of God has indited it, for that is the word used in Hebrews 2. 7. Angels cannot die,

but man can die, and the blessed Lord Jesus Christ became man, in order to die. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death," Heb. 2. 14.

John says, He came "by water and blood," 1 John 5. 6. His very coming into the scene of testimony involved death for Him. Again, He Himself said, "the Son can do nothing of himself," and "as I hear, I judge." In Mark 13. 32, He says, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man . . . neither the Son." These references show clearly that the Lord is viewed in manhood, and as accepting in infinite grace a *position* of relative inferiority. The apostle in 1 Cor. 15. 28, says further, "when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

There is also another side of the truth, and one was impressed in this connection with the import of that word in Zechariah, where the Spirit of God says, "Awake O sword against my shepherd"—He is God's shepherd, and He suffers thus for the sheep. But then it says, "against the man who is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." He became Man to die. He came to bear all that the

sword required, but in His own blessed Person, He is the Man who is Jehovah's Fellow. Now that is another view of the Lord in manhood. The One who is in manhood, is equal to Jehovah, for that is what "Fellow" means: it implies equality. It does not say "who *was* my Fellow." He ever *was* God before He assumed manhood, and He *was with* God. He speaks to His Father in John 17. 5, and says, "glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." In the past eternity He was there, He was God, and He was with God, but here in Zechariah, it says, "the man that *is* my fellow." The One who is now in manhood, is Jehovah's Fellow.

I think that is a fact that becomes greater and greater to one's heart. We have been disposed at times, I feel sure, to put limitations upon our Lord Jesus Christ, but that cannot be right. His glory knows no bounds, and while it is true He accepted limitations in grace, we cannot impose limitations on Him. On the one side He is presented as in subjection, and yet on the other hand, God speaks of Him as the "man that is my fellow." The Lord in manhood here, says, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?" Where was that?—where was He before? He dwelt in "the light which no man can approach unto"—no man can pass within that barrier.

Now it must be manifest that no creature could go outside the sphere in which God had placed him, but the Lord Jesus said, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"—and that is what He has done! He has "ascended up far above all heavens." He has gone there in manhood. The Lord is not bound by the limits of creation: that blessed Person, though come into manhood, could go outside all its boundaries. The Lord speaking to the Father in John 17. 5, addresses Him from the platform of equality and says, "glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Such is His greatness personally that He can say to the Father—"along with Thee"—as the New Translation reads. What a claim He has upon our hearts! The Lord would I am sure, give us an increasing sense of His unspeakable greatness, though Man, He has His part in the Deity; the One who "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God . . . but took upon him the form of a servant." The One "who descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things."

I want now to speak of what *we* share together, which is on a totally different platform. There is that which we have in common, in partnership, and I would like to speak first

of citizenship. Men glory in being citizens, it is a great thing in the world, and it should be a great thing to all the people of God. The apostle says, "Our citizenship is in heaven," and again, we are "fellow-citizens with the saints," Eph. 2. 19. What a citizenship! One would appeal to any who are still mixed up with the cities of this world which all found their origin in the city which Cain built in order that he might forget God. It was as a vagabond and a fugitive that he went out from the presence of God and built his city.

Fellow Christian, let me tell you that there is another city, the "city of God"—"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!" This is the city of which we are said to be "fellow-citizens." And what a city it is! Speaking of the heavenly city, the apostle John says, "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb." That is to say, there is no distance from God in that city, for God is there. Think of the blessedness of being in the presence of God! David having tasted it says, "A day in thy courts, is better than a thousand." I would rather have one day in the presence of God than a thousand days anywhere else. In this great and holy city, God's presence is known, and the presence of the Lamb. The glory of God enlightens it, and the lamp of it is the Lamb; all the glorious light of God

radiates through the One who suffered. And there is a river in it whose waters are clear as crystal. There is not a defiling element in the influence that flows from that city. The tree of life is there bearing its various fruits every month,—fresh presentations of Christ in living power to maintain in life the inhabitants of that city. And there is a great and high wall that keeps out all evil, and, dear friends, we are fellow citizens of *that* city! I wonder how much we know about it? You say, That is all future. No, it is not.

The apostle says, “Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” We *have come* to it. I wonder how much we are in ~~the~~ living good of that. I would just like to leave the thought with you, that if you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a citizen of the city of God, and you are to share in the rights of citizenship with all the saints. There is one thing that is needed for present entrance into the city: we must wash our robes. We cannot pass in with unclean robes. Revelation 22. 14, according to the best authorities should read, “Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life and that they should go in by the gates, into the city.” That is what the Lord wants us to do. If we do not know much about that city it may be because we have not washed our robes.

I do not dispute the right of any believer to be a citizen, but no one can go through the gates except with washed robes. Oh, you say, "That was done when I was converted." No, washing our robes is something further. What the Lord did when you were converted was to give you to be able to say, "Unto him that loves us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. 1. 5. That is what has already been done; but in chap. 22, it says, "Blessed are they that wash their robes"—that is continuous, and it is what *you* do. The Lord does not do that. Our robes are what surround us—our ways and the circumstances in which we are known. Literally and typically, they are what we are seen in, and God uses the figure in that way. A man is seen and known by his apparel; you do not see what is in his mind and heart, but you do see what he does, and where he goes, who his friends are, and what he reads; that is how you know him, that is how he appears. Those are his garments—his associations, his friendships, and his actions.

David said in Psalm 109. 18, of the wicked man, "he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment." But the Lord said to John, "Blessed are they that wash their robes." It means that you bring the import of the death of Christ to bear practically upon your actions, your friendships, your associations,

your books, indeed, your whole environment, and the things that are not in keeping with it, you refuse; and thus the robes are washed and clean, and you have right to go through the gates of the city, as a fellow citizen with the saints, and as of the household of God.

There is another city, Babylon, of which the Lord speaks in the Revelation, saying to His own who are still in it, "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins." Then there is the great city which is called spiritually, Sodom and Egypt, "where also our Lord was crucified." Think of a city in which is concentrated the awful spiritual corruption represented in Sodom, the independence of God represented in Egypt, and the hatred to Christ expressed in His being crucified. The apostasy which is fast increasing is marked by men crucifying for themselves the Son of God, and putting Him to an open shame. That is what it is in the sight of heaven, and all these abominations are spreading in Christendom, man is giving up God, and many of the so-called leaders in the professing church, are foremost in it. The Lord appeals to His own to "Come out of her." If there is one who is found identified with the system where confusion reigns as in Babylon, or where spiritual corruption and independence of God and the rejection of Christ exist, the Lord's word to you is "Come out of her, my

people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

I will now refer to what the apostle says in writing to Philemon; he calls him "our dearly beloved, and fellow labourer." I do not think the Lord ever intended to have any of His own unemployed. The apostle speaks of "working with his hands, the thing that is good." The hands are for work. What a vast field for labour there is! We are all to be in it as fellow labourers, partners in the work of the Lord. You say, What can I do? Well, the Lord gives to "every man his work," Mark 13. 34. He does not give to all the same work, but to every man his own work. In those days, one might have been a slave. What could a slave do? He could "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," Titus 2. 10. He can make the doctrine look magnificent; he can adorn it. The doctrine of God cannot be improved in any way, but the apostle says to the slave, Adorn it—show up its lustre by expressing the character of Christ in your work, in all good fidelity adorning the doctrine in everything.

The apostle speaks of sisters, "I commend to you Phoebe, our sister which is a servant of the church . . . a succourer of many and of myself also," Rom. 16. 1-2. She was a fellow labourer; many had turned away from the labour, so that writing from the prison

in Rome, Paul says, "these only are my fellow workers," Col. 4. 11. The Lord wants us all to share the labour, for there is much to be done. "Happy are these thy servants," said the Queen of Sheba when she came up and saw the magnificence of Solomon, his greatness, and his wisdom and the food of his table. She saw that it was a most blessed thing to serve such a king as that, and the Lord would call everyone that loves Him into His service, so that we might become fellow labourers, fellow helpers with the truth.

Then the apostle speaks of fellow soldiers. God grant that we may all have that character, for the war is on. Every believer as having the Holy Spirit is enlisted as a soldier, to take his place in the ranks as a fellow soldier, in confessing the Lord and in supporting the truth. You say, I do not know much about the battle. Well, you may not have gone very far yet, and you may know little of it, but it is well to face it. You remember Moses speaks of "The book of the wars of the Lord," Num. 21. 14. There are many wars which the Lord is conducting. He is the great Captain, the Captain of our salvation, the Captain of the Lord's host, the whole conflict is in His hands. He is the Commander-in-chief, and all His people are to be soldiers, sharing the conflict together under His leadership. That is the divine thought.

The first war is the one in which we are weak; the war with Amalek. It never ceases while time lasts. It does not go on in eternity, but throughout all the generations of time—when you are just converted, when you are a young man, when you are a father in the faith—that war is still on, and it goes on while time lasts. It is in that war that we begin to qualify as soldiers, and learn the gain of victory. We are to be soldiers—the battle is on with the flesh every hour, every day, every month, every year, till the end. Every one of God's people should be at war with the flesh, never making peace—that is where Saul went wrong, he spared something from Amalek; but God makes war with him, He wants every one of us in this war, and we will never get on in our souls unless we keep it up. It is the conflict of the Spirit against the flesh.

The Spirit as in the believer, is "against the flesh." "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit . . . these are contrary the one to the other," Gal. 5. 17. I would entreat every believer never to make peace with the flesh. We may be defeated at times, but never let us make peace. If we want to make progress as fellow soldiers, we shall qualify for conflict, and learn what victory is, as we stand firm in this war against the flesh. Let our attitude towards it be that of continual warfare.

When the Amalekite said to David, "Here is the crown and the bracelet" from Saul, the answer was "Fall on him." No quarter for an Amalekite. Then there is Mordecai sitting in the gate, and the king said, "Bow down" to Haman (an Amalekite). The king said it, but Mordecai did not bow. Mordecai would face death, for he was a soldier, he would not make peace with an Amalekite. The Lord has declared war on Amalek throughout all generations.

I cannot touch on the other wars of the Lord, there are many of them, but the reason we know so little about the others, maybe, is that we have not maintained the conflict with Amalek. That is the first war, and unless we learn how to be on the side of victory in the first war I do not suppose we shall ever meet Sihon and Og, or the Philistines, or the seven nations in Canaan—those spiritual wickednesses in heavenly places that the apostle warred against. I only mention that to show that the position of all believers together, is one of fellow soldiers in the battle.

Then we have fellow prisoners. The position at the end of the Christian dispensation calls for fellow prisoners. It calls for those who are prepared to accept limitations and reproach—who do not glory in being "free-lances." I met a believer, the other day, who said, "I am one of the broad-minded brethren, very

broad!" But he knew nothing about the chain, about accepting limitations because of the dishonour that has come upon Christ through the unfaithfulness of those who profess His name. What is precious to God, and to Christ, is held now in reproach and under restrictions, as the apostle says, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner," 2 Tim. 1. 8.

When the apostle was in prison he spoke of my fellow prisoners. He said of Onesiphorus, "he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain," 2 Tim. 1. 16. "When he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently and found me," verse 17. He shared the reproach, and how Paul appreciated such! The Lord is looking for those who will be fellow prisoners in the testimony, prepared to accept the limitations and reproach which are upon the people of God, and which will continue till the end.

We have finally, the fellow elder. Sometimes one hears it said, "This is our matter, this is a matter of local responsibility." Well, where will you put Peter? He says, "I . . . who am also an elder." I recognise that scripture connects elders with "each assembly," and "each city," Acts 14. 23; and Titus 1. 5. Paul and Barnabas ordained them in each assembly, and by the instructions to Titus, they were to be ordained in each city, the normal responsibility extending to the whole city.

Nevertheless Peter gives us another side of this, he writes, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder," or as it might rightly read, "their fellow elder." While no doubt, Peter had a local setting at Jerusalem, and Paul at Antioch, you could not limit the extent of such spiritual influence. It would rightly extend to wherever there was need for counsel or care. So Paul speaks of having the care of all the assemblies. You could not deny his right to come to the care-meeting in any locality where he might be. He had the care of all the assemblies, he cared for all the saints. What an asset he would be in any place. Then the apostle John when writing to two individuals says, "The elder unto the elect lady" . . . and "to the beloved Gaius."

Eldership according to God is far reaching in its influence and we need to value such as are marked by it and make room for them. I mention this that we might be balanced, and that we might see that while the handling of local matters belongs primarily to those who in each locality seek to care for the saints and the testimony, we must not assume independence, nor suppose that others who care for the saints have no right to enquire, but we should recognise such as have moral qualifications according to God, and who can be truly regarded as sharing in the care of the saints everywhere.

The Lord would help us to see that the real kernel of Christianity lies in what we have together. Scripture recognises what is distinct to each of us severally, but beside all that, and greater than all, there are the blessed privileges of being fellow-citizens, sharing the liberty of that great and blessed city together; fellow-labourers, each in his measure doing the Lord's work; fellow-prisoners, accepting the limitations and reproach of the closing hour; and, as seeing the great importance of caring for the saints, getting the gain of such as may be able to help in this, even from those outside our own localities.

May the Lord encourage us in what we share *together*. The Lord says in one place, "Have ye here any meat?" And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. I do not refer to the fish, but to the honeycomb, which suggests what is found in mutual affections and activities together. If you want an illustration of a fellow-labourer, you see it in a bee-hive. The Lord ate the honeycomb before them, that is, it was food to His own heart to get the sweetness of that which was secured in the mutual, happy relations amongst the saints as together.

The Lord grant that we may be able to give Him that which answers to the honeycomb to-day.

“GIVE ME TO DRINK”

John 4. 1-15; 1 Kings 17. 8-16;

Genesis 24. 10-27 *An Allen Skellin*

ONE of the most remarkable and wonderful things that we find in Scripture is that God should seek anything from men. As we consider the greatness of God and remember that everything that is good in the universe has come from His hand, and that He gives life and breath and all things, we are amazed to find that He seeks something—He desires to receive something from the hearts of men. As we know, God is sufficient in Himself. All His creatures have to be supported; no one, and no thing, can live without God—no angel can live without God. Scripture speaks of “angels’ food” showing that they have to be supported, not of course with literal food as we are, but they have to be supported. So it says, “He gives life and breath and all things.”

I want to say a few words to encourage all to devote what is left of the present period, to minister to God. That is the greatest possible object any of us could have in life—to minister to God—to be able to bring to Him something that is acceptable. What is said by the elders is this, “Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created,” Rev. 4. 11. Elders

are men who have learnt by long experience what is suitable to God and here they tell us that God's object in creating everything was that it should minister to Himself.

Each of these three scriptures gives us a request made for drink. The Lord was here in keeping with the desires of God,—He was personally seeking men. He was rich, supremely rich; but as the apostle says, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor," 2 Cor. 8. 9. His heart ever desired something from men that had not yet been yielded to Him. There was a longing in His heart that God might be responded to by men.

God took account of His longing, and such as the repentant thief on the cross was His answer to it. God provided, as it were, refreshment for the heart of Christ even on the cross; and then we hear those wonderful words of the dying thief, "This Man hath done nothing amiss." He says, "Lord, remember me." How it must have been as water of refreshment to Christ, to get something at that juncture, that ministered to His own heart.

I want to touch on these scriptures with this in mind. The Lord comes in John 4, to the well of Samaria, and there comes a woman of the city to draw water, and He says, "Give me to drink." I wonder if I am speaking to any here who have never heard these words,

for they lie behind the gospel. You say, I thought the gospel was to give me something; it will give you something, but it is more than that, it is to give God something. That is really what is behind all.

The Lord approaches this sinful woman, and says, "Give me to drink." He asks the woman first. She did not say No; she was prepared to face this great question. When the Lord said, "Give me to drink," she did not understand; none of us understands with the natural mind why the Lord should approach such as we are and say, "Give me to drink." The Lord desired that that poor woman should be so satisfied that she would never have another unsatisfied longing; instead of wanting everything that she could lay her hands upon, good, bad, or indifferent, her heart would be so satisfied that there would be that springing up within her that would be a living response to God; she would be a worshipper of God. We do not hear much about worship in gospel meetings, yet the Lord actually indicates to her that He wants her to be a worshipper. He wants her to know God so that her heart overflows in delight.

The apostle Paul says, "If we are beside ourselves, it is to God." The apostle Paul was such a man that when he thought of God as he knew Him through the coming

in of Christ, he was lifted outside of himself in an ecstasy of joy. God desires this, He seeks it. "The Father seeketh such to worship him"; and the Lord was there, seeking for another heart to minister to the pleasure of God. He says, "Give me to drink," and she did. When the disciples came afterwards and said, "Master eat," He said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me."

When we come to the passage in 1 Kings 17, we have the man of God, Elijah—one who represents God and testifies for Him. We have also a day of great distress, poverty and depression; when everything had gone down and down, and there was very little for anybody. For three and a half years there was to be no rain, and everything was drying up; the brook Cherith had dried up and Elijah had to leave it. God sends him to a widow woman, and when he meets this widow he says to her, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel that I may drink." He does not ask a lot, he says, "Fetch me a little water," and this woman is prepared to consider that. And then he says, "Bring me I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hands." Then she tells Elijah the true position. She says, "I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruse, and behold I am gathering two sticks that

I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." Then Elijah says to her, "Fear not, go and do as thou hast said, but make me thereof a little cake first," and she went and did it. That is what the Lord wants—that we should make Him a little cake first; to use the resources we have, but that there should be first, a little cake for the man of God.

Do you know why many of us have lost much during the last few years? I believe it is because we have not first made the little cake. We have said we must look after ourselves and then our children, and see that they are well provided for, but many of us have not first thought of God and what is for Him. But there is the present moment, and what the Lord is saying at the present moment, is "Give me to drink," and "Make me first a little cake." Things may get worse—probably they will,—but what ministers to the heart of Christ, is that there will be those on earth, who will use the meal and the oil to provide first for Him. If we do, we can leave the rest to Him, in His hands. Elijah says, "thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." Now look at the blessed conditions that came to this widow as the result of considering first for

Elijah, what results from considering first for the pleasure of the Lord, for what will minister to Him. She had all she needed, and her son also for the whole year, and in addition she had the company of Elijah, and that is worth much. The Lord will give His company to those who consider Him first.

But you say, Things are difficult. They are not any worse than they were for this widow. She was entirely dependent on what she could do for herself; she had no husband, she had a son to care for, and there was a famine. But she was prepared to put the Lord first in all that she had. The Lord will take care of such people. The Lord will see those through who put His interests first. You might think it hard—"Make me first a little cake," but she did not die, and the meal did not fail, and above everything else she had Elijah the man of God. You can understand that was a wonderful year!

I believe the end is going to be wonderful. When we answer to this, that all we have and are is just held to minister to God and to Christ, there is going to be a wonderful year. Such as do this are going to have in a special way, the company of Christ. I put it to you all, and to my own heart, Am I prepared to make first a little cake for the Lord? To hold what will minister to Him, the water, the meal and the oil as available

to Him before anybody else. You dear young people, let the spirit of that come into your heart—that the Lord is to be first. You may say, I shall suffer? No, you will not. I do not mean you might not lose a few shillings, but if you put the Lord first in everything you will find the Lord will be with you, and that is worth everything. That dear woman had the best time of all in her day; she was the happiest woman in that land. She had Elijah with her, meaning for us, the Lord was with her, and where you have the Lord you will never starve. Nobody ever starves where the Lord is. Where He is there is always enough and to spare.

When we come to the third case, it is not about one woman to whom the Lord said, "Give me to drink"; nor a widow woman who considered for God first, but in Genesis 24, we have in Rebekah a figure of the assembly. Abraham's servant as we all know, sets forth the patient service of the Spirit of God. He is sent out by Abraham to secure a wife for Isaac and the question is raised, What kind of person will he have? He stands at the well of water and prays, and in his prayer he discloses what is in his mind, the kind of person he is looking for. He prays God to grant that the woman whom he asks to let down her pitcher that he might drink and who shall say, "Drink and I will give thy camels drink

also," may be the one whom God had chosen for His servant Isaac. What a wonderful picture!

The Spirit of God is seeking to find those who will spend themselves, their time, their energies, their all in the interests of Christ and for the service of Christ. Such features show the undoing of what sin brought in. What marked Eve in the fall, was that she spent herself for her own gratification; she overlooked what was due to God, and she lost everything through stretching out her hand to grasp something for herself. Abraham's servant prays that there may be a woman who will say, when he asks her for a drink "Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also." He is looking for one suitable for Isaac. When he prays, he says, "Thy servant Isaac," suggesting to us the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, who took a bondman's form, He came here to serve. "I am among you," the Lord said, "as one that serves." He did not come to be ministered to, but to minister.

Now what kind of bride will He have? Only one prepared to be a servant; no other would be suitable. The servant has these features before him, and when Rebekah comes he seeks water from her. The New Translation says, "Let me sip a little water"; he does not make big claims upon her, but says, Are you prepared to consider for me?

If she be the woman suitable for Isaac, she must be prepared to be a servant to others. So she says, "Drink, my lord, and she hasted and let down her pitcher upon her hand" and she "hasted" to draw water for the camels also. What a feature of Christ as prepared to minister to others. She had never met this man, she did not know who he was, but she says, "Drink, my lord"; she is prepared to spend herself in ministering to him.

Then she says, "I will draw water for thy camels also,"—ten of them,—we know what camels can drink—and it says, "She hasted" and ran, she spent herself in urgent service till the camels had had enough. How suitable she is for Isaac! The man bows his head and worships; he had found one that was like Isaac, he had found in figure, features of Christ. He had found one who was prepared to lay herself out to serve others; for us, one ready to serve the Lord and to serve His people, to lay down his life for the brethren. He bows down his head and worships, and he claims this woman, and they have to acknowledge it is of God. What the Spirit of God is searching for in the hearts of the saints is features of Christ, living expressions of that which corresponds to Christ, the One who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," for the assembly must take character from Him.

One desired to bring before our hearts the great objective of ministering to the Lord. The apostle Peter speaks of those who run to the sink of corruption and think it strange we do not run with them. That describes many of the books and the pictures of to-day. They are sinks of vile corruption to which men are running, and they wonder why we do not go with them, they cannot understand it. Then there is Jacob's well, suggesting earthly mercies. We do not despise them, but they do not satisfy. You might have a bigger house, a bigger farm, better health, and all the mercies of this life, but you would not be satisfied. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

But instead of thirsting, the woman is asked to, "Give me to drink." From a satisfied heart there is a readiness to minister to Him, and, dear friends, that is what He says to you and to me, "Give me to drink." Instead of living to ourselves, our life henceforth is to be a ministration to Him. And then, "Make me first a little cake," what results will flow if this is really accepted. All that we have, and all that we are, or may receive, is to be held first to make a little cake for the Lord, to minister to His pleasure. And you will find He will be with us and there

will be no need. The meal and the oil will not fail till the Lord comes, if we first make a little cake for Him, if our objective is to minister to Him. Elijah says, "Give me a little water to drink." Let us be prepared each in our measure to live a life of service in the interests of Christ; not a life of self-indulgence, self-interest and self-seeking; seeking to be someone or something, even in the local meeting—but a life that is like Rebekah's. When Abraham's servant says, "Give me to drink," she says, "Drink, my lord, and . . . I will draw water for thy camels also." We are to be prepared to be of service to all the people of God.

When the Lord comes to take the assembly away, He will find the bride here, and the bride is a wonderful thought. I know those who are parents have seen it (and perhaps on the natural side it is very testing) the bride is one who prefers her husband to her father, mother, brother, sister, home and all. It does not mean, of course, that she ceases to love her parents, but she says, I prefer my husband to everything I ever had before.

Rebekah was such; "Wilt thou go with this man?" Leave Bethuel, Laban, home, country, everything you have ever lived in? and she says, "I will go." That is what the Lord is looking for to-day; hearts that so love Him, that they are prepared morally to leave

everything of this life,—ready to go and be for His pleasure eternally. May the Lord help us, dear brethren, to give place to this great thought, that the first thing is to minister to God. "Give me to drink" expresses the longing of the heart of Christ, and the Spirit of God, to have an answer to divine love.

OUR RESPONSE TO GOD AS GIVER

Hebrews 8. 1-3; Romans 12. 1-2;

Hebrews 13. 15, 16

I AM sure that we all appreciate in some measure the character of God as Giver, and join with the apostle in his word, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" The apostle does not tell us what the gift is, for it is characteristic: there are no words to describe the giving of God; it is beyond the power of speech, it is unspeakable! Take the position creatorially—think what God gives! It is said, "That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good," Ps. 104. 28. That Psalm indicates that the birds, the fish, the beasts, as well as man—"these wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season," verse 27. So the apostle preaching at Athens says, "God giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." Men, in their folly, would like to find the origin of life, and hope some day to manufacture it in their laboratories; but to discover the origin of life you must go to God, for He gives life not only to men, but to everything that lives, every plant, every insect, every fish. No one but God could give life and breath to all things.

When we come to the spiritual sphere, how freely has God given! What wealth of supply

there is with God! He keeps mercy for thousands! What a store of mercy God has, myriads have drawn upon it, for He is indeed "rich in mercy." God has such a supply of mercy, that He has been administering it to thousands upon thousands all down the ages. He has given His beloved Son, and the apostle says, will He not "with him also, freely give us all things"? He has given us the Holy Spirit; as the Lord said, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask?" So that I am sure we must to some extent appreciate the wonderful character of God as Giver.

Now there is a sense in which what the apostle says is true, that God does not need anything—He is not worshipped "as though he needed any thing," Acts 17. 25. For God alone is sufficient in Himself. Every creature is dependent; the very angels are dependent upon God for their support; but it says of Him, that He does not need anything. Nevertheless, God is prepared to receive—He desires to receive; He longs for us to come to Him with an offering. It is of this I desire to speak now: that God desires to receive. It is wonderful to think of God being prepared to receive an offering from us.

If this country proposed to give his majesty king George a present, they could offer it, but it would depend upon the king whether

it would be received. An entreaty would be sent with the present, appealing to the king to receive the gift, for his greatness would be recognised. But if this is necessary for an earthly potentate—how much more so as to God, who is so infinitely greater! who is indeed the “blessed and only Potentate; the King of kings, and Lord of lords . . . dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen!”

God says in the beginning of Leviticus, that if anyone desires to bring Him an offering, He is prepared and willing to receive of our hands. What can we give to One so great as God? What kind of an offering could we bring Him that He would be prepared to accept? The elders in Revelation tell us that everything was made to minister to God: “for thy pleasure they are, and were created.” That is how things will be in eternity; for in the new heavens and new earth, everything will minister to God. Every part of the universe will contribute something to God.

Now I want to indicate in a few simple words *what* God is prepared to receive, for the service of Christ as Priest can only relate to what is acceptable to God. The passage in Hebrews 8, says that He must have somewhat to offer if He is a Priest. The priest's service

is to offer—to present to God that which is the responsive fruit of His own work in the hearts of His people. He also blesses men; but His first service is to offer to God; and it says of the Lord “it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.”

It is well for us to think of the greatness of what Christ offered when on earth; He “offered himself without spot to God”; that must ever indicate the character of every offering that is acceptable to God. We shall discover little by little throughout eternity, what is wrapped up in that offering, but we shall never measure it fully—yet we can say that what He offered was blessedly acceptable to God. No offering could be compared with that one offering, when He “by the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God.” What a sacrifice! and at what cost to the Offerer. David would not offer to God that which cost him nothing; he felt instinctively that it would not be suitable—and at what cost did the Lord Jesus offer Himself! How acceptable was that offering!

In the burnt offering, Lev. 1, the Spirit of God distinguishes between the different parts: the blood, the head, the fat, the inwards and the legs, all are put on the altar, and the whole goes up in sweet fragrance to God. All that is suggested here might be said to be included in the word “Himself.” When we think of

the head, we think of the dignity of Christ. What profound dignity there was in that One who offered Himself to God! All that was dignified marked Him as devoted to God, and how acceptable it was to God. The fat speaks of the intrinsic excellence of Christ. What positive moral worth, what true excellence marked Him, and all was offered to God. The inwards—all those inward movements and feelings of which scripture speaks, and of which the offerer takes account. Scripture speaks of the Lord sighing, and of His groaning deeply; these were inward feelings; and it speaks of Him weeping, and again of His rejoicing: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth!" How much there is to take account of as to what is inward, and it was One with those perfect inward feelings, who was laid on the altar, acceptable to God.

Then the legs; the Spirit of God through Solomon says that the legs of the Beloved were as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold. Those pillars of marble would describe the stability of His movements through this world—how stable, how firm. Think of His movements as He went down, that more excellent way, to death! never deviating to the right hand or the left—going straight on. All the movements of Christ combine to portray to us the kind of offering that went up to God, when He offered Himself without

spot to Him: *all* was devoted to God—*all* was acceptable. What perfect stability marked Him as He “set his face to go to Jerusalem,”—to go to death in the accomplishment of the will of God.

The feelings that entered into that offering may be understood as we discern the import of the scripture in Hebrews 5. It speaks of the Lord as anticipating death thus, “who in the days of his flesh when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death and was heard in that he feared,” Heb. 5. 7. Think of the fragrance of those prayers offered up to God; they went up as a cloud of incense. We are not told much about the Lord’s prayers except that they were offered. In Luke 3 we are told that at His baptism He was praying, and in another place that He continued all night in prayer. On the Mount of Transfiguration the fashion of His countenance became glorious as He prayed.

What holy fragrance ascended to God in those prayers, and especially in those tears; those cryings in view of death have their own peculiar value and bring before us the inward feelings of the Lord as He was about to offer Himself. How acceptable to God was every thought and feeling in the Man Christ Jesus; so that in Him we see the

divine standard. Everything that is of Christ is acceptable to God. The offerings of the Old Testament, speak of some appreciative apprehension of Christ in the soul of the offerer. Whatever view is presented, all speak of some enjoyment of Christ which the offerer brings to God; and God accepts that, and accepts the offerer in the fragrance of it. The one who brings it is accepted in the fragrance of what he brings.

I would like now to speak of what we may offer, and the first thing I think, is that we may offer our bodies. It is wonderful that we have this word in Romans 12, for in the beginning of the epistle we see how the members of the body had become instruments of unrighteousness. A man's throat like an open sepulchre, the poison of asps under the lips, the feet swift to shed blood, no fear of God before the eyes, the whole body corrupted; yet the apostle reaches a point when he says to the saints, "I beseech you . . . by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." God is prepared to accept our bodies, He made them for Himself. When God said, "Let us make man in our image," He had in view that as bearing His image, man should be rendered as tribute to Him. "Whose is this image and superscription?"

the Lord says in reference to the penny; and they answer "Caesar's." If it bears Caesar's image give it to Caesar, it is his tribute, but give "unto God, the things that are God's."

Think of fifteen hundred millions of human beings now on the earth, think of the effect if all were yielding themselves tribute to God! The apostle says, "I beseech you . . . to present your bodies a living sacrifice." It will cost something on our side to be a sacrifice "holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." I would like to challenge all, What are you doing with your bodies? We can never come into the understanding of the truth in Corinthians and Ephesians, save as first understanding Romans. The great question is first, What about my body? This is what the young people need to face: what about the body, for what am I holding it? If we have not faced that question and found a solution to it, we cannot go further. God wants our bodies, and when it speaks of the body, it means the whole vessel complete. Some may think they have given their tongues, or their minds, but God wants the body, that is the complete vessel. We may say we will give our ear, eye, tongue, but God wants all; the tendency with us is to reserve part for ourselves. He wants the body, and every member of it to be held for Him. The apostle says, "I beseech you."

There are many exercises I cannot touch upon now, between the 7th and 12th chapters of Romans, but one enjoys the thought of God being prepared to accept the offering of our bodies—that it is acceptable to Him. In the 7th chapter the writer says, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”—he was learning what the flesh is, and that the body is the instrument of it. God gives the Holy Spirit; and in 1 Corinthians the apostle says, “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?” and in the power of that, the body is held for God. We cannot proceed in the service of God, unless the body is held in the power of the Holy Spirit for God, and presented to Him. It entails sacrifice on our part on the line of the refusal of the flesh, and the putting to death of the deeds of the body by the Spirit, but the point is that God, the great and blessed Giver, desires us to offer our bodies to Him.

Now referring to Hebrews 13, we are told of two other sacrifices that we can offer to God, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” The apostle enjoins upon us that there should be this sacrifice of praise maintained continually, for God inhabits the praises of His people. One would encourage brethren in this connection, not to deprive

God of His offerings. He said of old, "bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it," Mal. 3. 10.

I know it will cost us something, for it says the *sacrifice* of praise—not mere words,—but that the heart should be free to flow out in praise to God, every idol having been displaced. You cannot have an idol and offer the sacrifice of praise, but when everything that displaces God is judged and put away, the heart can be free to flow out to God, as the Psalmist says, to "God, my exceeding joy!" The apostle Paul says, "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God": as he thought about God, he was in an ecstasy of joy. Peter went up to the housetop to pray, and as he was there, above the earth and its surroundings, his soul became in an ecstasy; he was thinking about God. That was acceptable to God, for He loves the praises and the outflowings of the hearts of His people. He can and does accept them.

The Lord Jesus is the chief Musician, the chief Singer, and He gathers up these praises from the hearts of the saints, so the exhortation is "by him therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that

is, the fruit of our lips." That is worthy of observation: "the fruit of our lips." God wants it expressed. God would say, Let me hear thy voice, He wants to hear words as well as what is in the heart; and the praise goes up as a sacrifice well pleasing to Him.

Then it says, "To do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." It is well to recall what the apostle said of the Philippians, that in their deep poverty, they had given to the interests of God, and he says it was an odour of a sweet smell. It is not that God *needs* it, but it is an odour of a sweet smell, acceptable and well pleasing to Him. The expression in a practical way of the response of our hearts to God, and to His saints, in doing good and communicating, is acceptable to God. How much room there is on every hand to do good!

You ask, What is it to do good? Well, everything that is expressive of the character of God is good, "none is good save one, that is God." Ten thousand opportunities exist for every brother and sister to do good. Do not hold what you have selfishly; God has communicated—the Lord Jesus has communicated—"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." So the

apostle says that to do good and to communicate is well pleasing to God. It is an offering to Him, an odour of a sweet smell.

One loves to think of the sacrifices never seen by men, those that go up to God from the saints. The Lord when here, sat over against the treasury, He was taking account of the sacrifices—the offerings, and there came one poor woman who had two mites, and she cast them into the treasury. The Lord called the disciples' attention to it—it was something acceptable to heaven. Luke presents this as a sort of climax to his gospel. She is the result of the great physician's activities.

In the beginning, when sin came in, the woman though surrounded by everything that was pleasing to the eyes and good for food, was not satisfied—she stretched out the hand of lust, of covetousness, to take what God had forbidden. She thought God might have given more, and all the misery of mankind has come from that. Then comes in the blessed Physician of whom Luke loves to write, and through His healing hand, and His activities here, the Lord brings to light another woman. She is wonderfully recovered. She has tasted death, for she is a widow, and she has but two mites which make a farthing. As this widow approaches the treasury of God, she says God is so great to my heart,

I would not hold back anything from Him. Her delight in God was such that all she had, all her living was devoted to Him. The Lord called attention to this, and He calls us to take notice of it. It was an odour of a sweet smell, an offering and a sacrifice well pleasing to God, as springing from a heart that loved God.

God is accepting these things from men for they speak to Him of Christ, and one would desire to encourage all our hearts to offer them; while appreciating increasingly the boundless giving of God, let us remember there is the other side; God is not demanding—He does not say you must give Him the tenth, but if it is in the heart of any to offer, He tells us that He can accept; reckoning that every heart that loves Him will take steps to have and to bring something.

May God help us to so come under the influence of that blessed One who offered Himself to God, that we may be here as those who offer their bodies, as cleansed and by the power of the Holy Spirit held for God. May we be found offering the sacrifice of praise—doing good and communicating, “for with such sacrifices, God is well pleased,” and we shall surely say with David: “Of thine own do we give thee!”

THE ASSEMBLY BUILT BY CHRIST

Matthew 16. 13-18; *chap.* 17. 1-5; *chap.* 18.

1-10, 15-20

THE scripture in Matthew 16, reminds us of the fact that the Lord is active as Builder. It is said that "he that built all things is God," Heb. 3. 4. He is the Builder of the material universe. He spoke to Job of this. When Job undertook to enter into controversy with Him God said, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth . . . who hath laid the measures thereof . . . or who hath stretched the line upon it?" All these are constructional ideas. The heavens are referred to as His upper chambers. But the Lord in Matthew speaks, not of a material building, but of a spiritual structure which He is now building.

The first building by man as recorded in scripture, is the city which Cain built when he departed from God after the murder of Abel. He went out from the presence of God and built a city. That line of things has gone on up to the present day, man is raising up a vast structure for his own pleasure and aggrandisement, but apart from God. There are no moral foundations in such a building, and it will come down. In contrast to this, we find Abraham waiting for a city having foundations of which God is the Builder and Maker.

The exercises and activities of David and Solomon regarding the temple, help us to see the glory and magnificence of God's building. It is most remarkable that the great structure of Solomon's temple was reared in order to house what was outwardly so small, but inwardly and intrinsically so great, that is the ark typifying even Christ Himself. Thus in what God is erecting morally in the souls of His people to-day, a shrine is being secured for Himself in their affections, they are being "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit," Eph. 2. 22.

In Matthew 16, the Lord Jesus speaks of His building,—“my assembly.” Christ the Son of the living God is the Builder of this, and the material He uses is stones such as Peter was, as his confession indicated, reminding us of the living character of what divine Persons are doing. The Lord says of His building that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Not all the administration of the powers of darkness will prevail against this building. The enemy first sought to get rid of Christ, and though he did succeed in having Him put to death, yet Satan did not prevail, for Christ rose from among the dead the third day, thus establishing His supremacy over Satan and over death, his mightiest weapon.

Later, when the assembly was established here by the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, the same enemy energised the breathings of Saul of Tarsus against those who constituted the assembly. But did he prevail? No! the one who so ferociously carried out the behest of the devil, is himself brought to the feet of Jesus. So also, in the Dark Ages, and the Reformation period, when Popery manifested such bitter hatred, the people of God were not overwhelmed, for they are still here.

The Lord is seen in Matthew 17, securing material for His building. He takes three of the future pillars of the assembly—Peter, James and John (see Gal. 2. 9) up on the high mountain, with the intention, I believe, of conveying impressions of Himself and His glory, which, as received into their souls, would qualify them for their place in His building. It is a most important feature in our education for the assembly, that we should apprehend the glory of Christ. As He was transfigured before them “His face did shine as the sun.” The sun sets forth the supremacy of Christ who is to influence all for good, and as the sun gives life and warmth to all the earth, so does Christ to His own, to those who form the assembly. This impression built into the soul, renders us free from other domination, and fits us for our service in the assembly. Matthew tells us “His raiment

was white as the light"; raiment speaks of that by which we are known, our ways, our circumstances. How wonderful were the ways of Christ here; pure, guileless, transparent. He was altogether that which He said He was: every movement was before God, and in the light. That indicates the character of those who compose this building; and all must take character from Christ, who is its foundation.

How solemn it is to think that the religious leaders of the world, whom Peter addressed as builders, could find no way of fitting Christ into what they were building when He was presented to them. He was the Stone set at nought by the builders, but which has "become the head of the corner . . . and it is marvellous in our eyes," Matt. 21. 42. What a wonderful place Christ occupies in relation to God's building! How we need to consider this.

Peter on the mount fails to give this place to Christ, and so suggests three tabernacles, one for Christ, one for Moses and one for Elias. But the Father's voice is at once heard announcing the unique place that Christ has in His affections and commanding us to "hear him." This is a further precious ray of the glory of Christ. Peter says, "when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory"—it was not only what was

said, but the voice in which it was uttered which impressed him. Even in human relationships where things are right, the very tone of a father's voice as he speaks to his son will convey the special place the son enjoys in his father's thoughts and affection. So on the Mount, "such a voice" conveyed to Peter and James and John, the ineffable affection of the Father towards the Son. While they were also eye-witnesses of His majesty, the voice indicated the place they were to give to Christ in the assembly; they were to "hear him!"

Another step in our education, as being material for the building, is seen when they came down from the mountain to the ordinary affairs of life: the question is raised as to "who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Matt. 18. 1. "And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them." He would give an example of the spirit which should mark those who are to be built into the assembly. Indeed "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The Lord Himself fully displayed the spirit that was to mark His own; He was marked by the same humility at the close of His pathway, as when a Babe in Bethlehem. The thief on the cross found Him as approachable as did

the wise men of the East. How dependent He ever was, how approachable, how transparent, how obedient! All these features properly attach to those who take note of the little child. Such a spirit is not of much account in man's world, for the element of deception is not in it. Children, indeed, are rapidly becoming less and less desired in the world, as apostasy increases, but these features of a little child are according to God.

In Matthew 18, the Lord refers to the things that offend and hinder our progress, and render us unserviceable to one another. First, He says, "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire," verse 8. It may be objected that if one who is exercised as to being suitable as material for Christ's building accepts the principles suggested, his activities and apparent usefulness will be sadly curtailed, for what is indicated would mean that one's activities and movements would be greatly affected. But the Lord says it is good to cut off one hand or one foot, and to accept the limitation so enforced, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into eternal fire. It is not suggested, of course, that any true believer will be cast into the hell of

fire, but the Lord is speaking of the principle of these things.

Then again, one may say he prefers to maintain a wide outlook and be broadminded. Better, says the Lord, to restrict one's vision to what God is doing—though such are not really restricted—than to look into and embrace what will eventually come under the Lord's judgment. As we look at things according to God, we acquire great breadth of vision. Peter himself says "nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness": and "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God," 2 Pet. 3.

In the latter half of Matthew 18, the Lord speaks of the relations existing among those who compose the assembly. While it is serious that offences should come in, there is instruction as to how to meet them. We are to maintain the feature of transparency, and to go direct to the offender—not indeed with any other object than recovery. Instead alas, how often the offender is not spoken to at all, but the ear of another is sought. Such is a feature of this world, in which sometimes it is deliberately attempted to blacken a person's character; behaviour of this kind is not worthy of *that* world where the glory of God shines. I feel sure that in

most cases where the person himself is sought out alone in the spirit of recovery, he is recovered and relations among the saints suitable to God are maintained. As we act according to these principles we may count upon the support of God.

If, however, one alone fails in this, he is to take one or two besides, and should they fail, the assembly is to be told, and if the offender neglects to hear the assembly, he becomes amenable to its judgment, as the final court of appeal on earth. Such principles apply to all cases of trespass, and as we follow these divine principles, we find they are effectual.

Thus that which the Lord said in Matthew 16, He would build, is viewed anticipatively in chapter 18, and, as consequent on the death and resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Spirit, is already here and functioning. So the Lord says "If two of you shall agree"—meaning two who are thus educated and intelligent, and are prepared to act on the directions indicated. Such are assembly material; and if "two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," Matt. 18. 19-20. According to this

gospel, as long as the assembly is on earth, the presence of Christ can be counted on by those who even in weakness seek to follow the principles governing the assembly as indicated in these chapters.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Genesis 49. 22-26; *John* 3. 35; *Proverbs* 31.

10-12

I DESIRE, dear brethren, to speak a little of the trustworthiness of Christ. I am sure that we have all been made to feel that apart from what is of God, there is nothing we can trust in this world. Nations think they can trust in their navies and armies, but that confidence is waning. Others would put reliance on money, but we have lived to see the world's finance lose its value. It is natural for men to trust in their own hearts, but the scriptures say, "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool." What a history that of man has been!

I suppose Satan unfallen, was the most trusted of beings then created. It says he was the "anointed cherub that covereth"; "the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee, in the day that thou wast created," *Ezek.* 28. 13.—possibly a suggestion that the power was given him to express the praises of the creation, such as are referred to in *Job* 38. But instead of being thus serviceable to God the mind of Satan is expressed in the words of the king of Babylon who said "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will be like the Most High," *Isa.* 14. He proved

untrustworthy in that which God had committed to him.

When we think of Adam, he too, betrayed his trust. The garden of Eden was put into his trust to care for and keep; but did he do so? No he attempted to take for himself what was for God. When we come to Noah, he is entrusted with a new world—a cleansed world, but he could not be trusted; he became drunk.

To Solomon was given “wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.” He was able to speak of the whole creation, his largeness of heart enabled him to speak of the trees, the beasts, the fowls and creeping things, and of fishes, but he betrayed his trust.

Then when we come to Nebuchadnezzar, God gave him the place of king of kings. He exercised authority over the whole known earth, but he betrayed the trust given to him, and usurped God’s place. So with the assembly in its responsibility: how unfaithful it has been, and what a history of unfaithfulness has marked man in relation to it.

How good it is, dear brethren, to leave our side of things, our mistakes, the conflict between good and evil, and look at Christ. We may speak of it as objective, but then the subjective comes out of what is objective. If

you have not an object, you cannot have what corresponds. Stephen looked up into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus. He saw what was in heaven, he saw "the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." There is an object, and as an inevitable consequence, the features of the glory of God, and Jesus, were seen in that man. As you look at him with the face of an angel, and see him kneeling down, and hear expressed in his words the very grace of heaven, you see features of the glory of God and Jesus expressed in one who has Christ as object. So just in a simple way, one thought it might help to direct the hearts of all to the trustworthiness of Christ.

I suppose the outstanding feature which Joseph represents is that he could be trusted. You see that at every point, except perhaps one. You see him first in Jacob's house; it says that Joseph brought the evil report of his brothers' doings to his father. This is a very trustworthy thing. He went out with them, and heard what they said, and saw what they did, and he came and told Jacob. It is not trustworthiness to cover what is evil, but rather to come and make it known where it ought to be known. You may be hated for it; it may bring you into suffering. Joseph came and told Jacob everything—he proved his trustworthiness in this, but they

sold him for it. Jacob had made Joseph a coat of many colours, he could be trusted with that distinction. The many colours refer to the many glories in which Christ is arrayed. How natural it is for our hearts to become elated if we become distinguished—but not so Joseph, he could be trusted. No one but Christ could really wear what that coat of many colours sets forth—that is, be invested with every glory that God could put upon man.

Jacob sent Joseph out to the fields—the place where we are all tested. If you go into the world, you will find it a testing place. Joseph goes into the fields, and what he is sent to do, he does. When asked “whom seek ye?” he says, “I seek my brethren.” He carried out the mission on which Jacob sent him. Later on you find him tempted and tried, having been sold into Potiphar’s house. Potiphar gets an instinct of the trustworthiness of Joseph, so that he puts the whole of his house into Joseph’s hands. Joseph is tested and tempted, but he would not betray his trust. He will not take one step that would mark a betrayer. That takes him into prison, but he is not long there before all the prisoners are put into his hands. The prison keeper finds that he can be trusted. He comes out of the prison to bind Pharaoh’s princes, and is given a place next to Pharaoh

in Egypt. He uses all that power in a trustworthy way; he uses it to secure the supremacy of Pharaoh absolutely, so that the ultimate result of his administration is that everything comes into Pharaoh's hands.

How trustworthy he was in the exercise of discipline. He will not take any short cuts. We see his heart moved with the utmost tenderness to his brethren, but he waits in patience the whole period, until he reaches the end—the end of the Lord—and then makes himself known. All these things dear brethren, speak typically of Christ, as the One who can be trusted at every point. One would just like to connect that with the end of John 3. It says "The Father loveth the Son and hath put all things into his hand."

That is like the blessing pronounced on Joseph by Jacob,—“blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb,” shall be upon his head. He can be trusted with them. The blessings which reach to “the utmost bound of the everlasting hills” are on “the head of him who was separated from his brethren.” Now Jacob had learned that Joseph could be trusted, but he had learned that Reuben could not be trusted. A painful lesson we all have to learn. Reuben was his firstborn, and when he was born, no doubt wonderful hopes were found in Jacob's

heart for his son. Parents know the pleasure they have in a firstborn. What hopes, what possibilities are entertained. So as to Reuben Jacob says "Thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power." No doubt that was what Jacob had hoped for, but what he finds, dear brethren, is that Reuben cannot be trusted, but that he was a betrayer of the most sacred relationship on earth. Nothing is safe in Reuben's hands.

We are all gradually learning that, are we not? as to what we are in the flesh. There is nothing that can be trusted to our hands, the most sacred and hallowed thing will be corrupted by man according to flesh. Jacob had to learn that in Reuben, and so Joseph takes Reuben's place of firstborn by moral worth. By right, the birthright was Reuben's but Jacob says, all the blessing shall come on the head of Joseph. I thought that had a bearing on John 3: "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." God has entrusted everything to the hands of Christ; and John shows us the things.

In the fourth chapter we see that God has put into the hands of Christ the administration of living water. The Lord said to the woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would

have given thee living water." John the Baptist realised something of the greatness of Christ when he said "He must increase, but I must decrease." He said, "I baptise with water (a great service that was) but there standeth one among you . . . whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." "The same is he that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost," John 1. 26-33. The Lord Jesus Christ has been entrusted with the administration of living water, let us ponder the grace in which He administers it.

John says "Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well," chapter 4. 6, and the Lord said to that poor thirsty woman of Samaria, "Ask." If she knew what was available in Him, if she knew who had said to her "Give me to drink," she would have asked and He would have given living water. He is prepared to give the living water to everyone that asks of Him. It is in His hand: "the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand." The Lord could be entrusted with the administration of this precious gift, and every thirsty one who asks for it can have it, for He came to make it available to every man.

In John 5, the Lord says "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself"—what a wonderful thing that is! As to His Person it

is true that "In him was life" but I am not speaking of that side. Being here as the Sent One of God it has been given to the Son to have life in Himself in view of communicating life. Think of the greatness of One who is entrusted with the power to communicate life to man! Men would like to have ability to communicate life; they can take life, but they have no power to give it. It is something infinitely great for us to consider that the blessed Lord can speak to men and communicate life to them; He says "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live," John 5. 25. How we see that set forth in chapter 11.—Lazarus is sick, and Mary and Martha thought the Lord would come at once. They sent a message to Him, "he whom thou lovest is sick," but He abode two days where He was; He waited to allow death its full power, before He used His power to give life. He says "I am the resurrection and the life." He knew what was required, and He could be trusted to use that power for the glory of God; as Jesus said "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God," chap. 11. 4.

John proceeds to tell us of many things that have been given into the hands of Christ. He was given power over all flesh, chap. 17. 2. How the Lord stands out in that way.

Nebuchadnezzar was nothing to compare with Him, nor was Adam. Think of One who can be entrusted with authority over "all flesh!" And what for? That He should give eternal life to as many as God had given Him. The Lord speaks to the Father of "the words which thou gavest me." He could be trusted with them; every detail of the mind of God was given to Him to communicate to men. "The words which thou gavest me—I have given unto them." He did not keep them simply for Himself. Peter discovered that when he said "thou hast the words of eternal life." So again, dear brethren, as to the saints, the Lord could say to His Father, "Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition. "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name." He could be trusted with everyone belonging to God. "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." The Lord can be trusted with everything, to carry out all according to God.

Then at the end we have the wonderful word, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it," John 18. 11. He could be trusted even to drink that cup. It was given Him of the Father, and the Lord's closing words in John's gospel are "It is finished." "I have finished the work

which thou gavest me to do." The Lord left nothing incomplete. Incompleteness marks man; there are defects in everything that man does, but what marks God is that He finishes His work. We read in Genesis 2. 1, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." They have stood ever since. The Lord Jesus was given a work to finish, and He could say, "It is finished."

Well dear brethren, the trustworthiness of Christ continues in heaven, for He is there interceding for us. He has entered into heaven itself, "now to appear in the presence of God for us." Who can tell what each one and all of us owe, to the intercession of Christ? The interests of every individual saint are in the hands of Christ, and He intercedes for us. He is carrying on the work of God; it goes on in His hands. Then we come to the day when He "must reign." How one loves the thought! It is just like Joseph, who could not be kept in the prison, he must come forth. The Lord must reign till He puts every enemy under His feet; until there is not a lawless will in the universe. Then in supreme trustworthiness, He delivers up the kingdom to God, "that God may be all in all." Everything having been brought into subjection to the Son, all has been completed that was entrusted to Him.

If we make room in our affections for Christ, something of what we read in Proverbs 31 will come to light. It reads, "Who can find a virtuous woman, for her price is far above rubies? The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil." "She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." This refers to the assembly, and these features will be seen in every local assembly, indeed in every individual composing the companies. The first feature seen is, "the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." How little we have corresponded to Christ. How trustworthy saints were at the beginning, and that is what the Spirit of God is looking for.

Simon the sorcerer said to Peter, "Here is money," but Peter replies, "thy money go with thee to perdition." Ananias and Sapphira came to God with a lie, and God judged Ananias for this; then Peter says to Sapphira, "the feet of the young men which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out." He entirely endorsed the judgment of God. God will not have lies in the assembly. Ananias falls dead and the young men carried him out, then Sapphira comes in and Peter says she shall be carried out also. Had he made light of their sin, he would have betrayed the trust.

God wants us to judge lies. At the root of nearly every sorrow among the people of God, there is what is false. These sorrows originate with the "father of lies," he is the root of every difficulty. While what is false is allowed, the Lord cannot bring about trustworthiness in us; He desires truth in the inward parts; so that He may trust us in some measure with what is proper to the assembly. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her," should be true of us now. Soon the word will be fulfilled "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." She has been loyal to Him, and she is not ashamed for Him to come.

The assembly in Philadelphia had not denied His name—that is, the name of the Husband. Philadelphia had been true to Him. Thus the Lord is seeking, dear brethren that there should be at the end, that which He can trust, which is true to His name, and that we should do Him good and not evil all the days of our life. The Lord wants continuance—all the days, that we may not dishonour His name. Those who are younger, may have more days; the Lord is taking up young men and young women to-day in view of maintaining freshness and power till He comes. It is not necessarily that they are going to remain here a long time, but the Lord gives power to continue. One would

desire that the Lord might help us to be trustworthy to the end in affection to Him.

Jacob's soul at the end of his course is in ecstasy as he thinks of Joseph. He has many humbling things to say about the others, but unlimited blessings are to be on the head of Joseph. Every moral perfection and glory will be seen in Christ, and as we ponder these glories we can let our hearts go out in extolling His name. He is trustworthy in regard of everything that is committed to Him. The apostle Paul says to Timothy, "I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep for that day the deposit I have entrusted to him," and then He charges Timothy, "Keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in you, the good deposit entrusted," 2 Tim. 1. 14.

One would like to leave that word with you, that it may re-echo in the hearts of the young men and women. The Lord has put something into your hearts, and whatever it is, keep it by the Holy Spirit, that it may not be lost. May the Lord help us to find our joy in the contemplation of Christ, into whose hands all is committed, and will be held in perfect trustworthiness for ever.

LIFTING UP THE HANDS IN THE NIGHT SEASON

Psalm 30. 5; *Psalm* 134. 1-3; *Job* 35. 9, 10;
Song of Songs 3. 6-8

ONE has in mind that we may be marked by that which is pleasing to God. There is every evidence that the night is closing in, for the darkness is increasingly manifest. I desire to show that the Lord would maintain features that are according to God, so that instead of being marked by the works of darkness, we may be marked as those who are "of the day," 1 Thess. 5. 8. The apostle says, "They that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night,"—those are the characteristics of man's night. First he becomes insensible to what is due to God—and how appallingly that is developing—insensibility as to what is due to God is seen abroad in Christendom. Then drunkenness also marks the night, I do not of course, mean literal drunkenness, but excesses which reduce and destroy true sensibilities. Take, for instance, the wide-spread craving for pleasure; then also, the desire for fame of some kind, which often dulls and even destroys right sensibilities. What is due to wives and children and home, is often sacrificed to a moment's fame. Love of money is another form of excess, to satisfy which all

else is sacrificed. All these are forms of drunkenness, resulting in the loss of true sensibilities.

I desire to show with the Lord's help, what He would have marking His people as the night develops. The Lord would help us to have features that are suitable to God. In this connection, it will help to look a little at what the Lord did in the night,—how He acted in the midst of darkness the like of which has never been. He entered into a night that was darker than any other in man's history. I am not speaking of physical darkness, but of moral darkness. Scripture tells us that one feature of this is hatred. It says, "He that hates his brother is in the darkness,"—that is, hatred is one of the features of moral darkness. Was there ever such hatred as was expressed against the Lord, especially in the closing moments of His life?

The Lord said, "They have seen and hated, both me and my Father," and again, "they hated me without a cause." What touching words! He never gave them any cause. What cause could they produce that man should hate Christ? It was without a cause. Could anyone go through that wonderful life and produce one reason why such an One should be hated, and with such intense hatred? It was expressed in many ways. On two occasions recorded in

the gospel of Matthew, men spat in His face! Think of what lies behind that—the intense contempt and hatred. Then it says also, that they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall—the mingling of vinegar with gall would produce the bitterest drink that man could offer—they gave that to Jesus. They took thorns and plaited them, indicating the deliberateness of their act. And then finally, it says, they crucified Him. The Psalm says, “They pierced my hands and my feet,”—they crucified the Lord of glory.

Another element of darkness is deception. The apostle said he had “renounced the hidden things of darkness.” Where can such deception be seen as in that period of which the Spirit of God says, “It was night”? To Judas who had been with Him the Lord says, “My friend, wherefore comest thou hither?” The Lord spoke to him as “My friend.” That is the place he had outwardly in relation to the Lord,—he was His “friend.” What marks a friend properly is that he “loves at all times.” Judas had that place as one of His friends, and it says He came to the Lord and “covered him with kisses,” but all the time there was treachery in his heart. While he covered Him with kisses, he was betraying his Master.

Envy also, is a feature of moral darkness. What power envy has. It says of Pilate, that

he "knew that for envy they had delivered him up." The scripture says the Lord went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. That is what the merely religious man hates; the priests and levites; the scribes and pharisees, could not tolerate One with whom God was. While they went on with their forms and ceremonies in all their deadness, they knew that God was with Jesus, and it brought out that dark terrible feature of envy, and "who can stand before envy?"

All these elements of darkness were concentrated in the dark night of Calvary; for it was their hour and the power of darkness. Into that dark night our blessed Lord went, and what did He do? There is one thing He did that is proper to the night—He wept. "Weeping may endure for a night"—weeping is proper to the night, meaning that those who go through the night rightly, feel things intensely, and the weeping is the expression of that intense sorrow and grief. How the Lord felt that night! We have already referred to the betrayal by Judas, and how intensely the Lord felt that as He said in the language of the Psalmist, "If it had been an enemy I could have borne it." How intensely He felt the treachery and hatred as He drew near to that dark moment. It says "He began to be sorrowful and very heavy,"—what words

to apply to the Lord! Man's hatred, treachery and envy were felt in His own spirit. He said "Reproach hath broken my heart"—think of the intensity of those inward feelings that made Him say "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death."

Then in addition to all that I have mentioned, there was also another form of darkness which gave character to the night which the Lord had to face. "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour"—the darkness of the judgment of God against sin, into which He, whose delight it was to live in the sunshine of the love of God, went,—into the utter distance—a most solemn and unique moment. We can only contemplate this with wonder and adoration. Yet even the anticipation of this moment, necessitated by the holy judgment of God against sin, did not hinder the Lord fulfilling what we read of in Psalm 134: "Ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord."

God intended that however dark the night, His servants should stand before Him and minister to Him,—the service of the sanctuary should go on. Think how the Lord took up that service in that darkest of all nights. The service of God does not stop although the night be dark. So in John 13, it says

when Judas went out that "it was night," and in chapter 17, we see that great Priest lifting up His eyes to heaven, and speaking to His Father. He is seen there presenting to God at the golden altar, the fragrant incense, the fragrance of which remains to this day. The true Priest is there seen standing and ministering, albeit it was such a night!

You see Him in Gethsemane as the night deepens, yielding still the fragrance of One wholly devoted to the will of God: "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." The holy incense goes up to God as a fragrant offering, acceptable to God. As it says in Hebrews 5. 7, "Who in the days of his flesh when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard"—What an offering! What shall we say dear brethren, of the sweetness rising from Calvary, when He lifted up His hands in the sanctuary and said "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Think of the holy preciousness of that to God! How it has affected many a heart as the savour of it reaches it, but it was first presented to God. Above all, it was in that night that He "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God," Heb. 9. 14. It was

done in the night—and the holy service of God still went on.

Then we come to that other scripture in Job. How the Lord fulfills that! Elihu said that what marked men was that they did not say “Where is God my maker who gives songs in the night?” Though that could not strictly apply to the Lord yet He had a song in the night—“And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the mount of Olives,” Mark 14. 26. You may say, How does that fit in with His tears? They are both true dear brethren, and while weeping is proper to the night, singing is also. Both are to go on. How perfectly it was so with the Lord. It was in that night in which He was betrayed, that He took bread, and blessed and brake it and gave it to them. And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them: and after that it is added “And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the mount of Olives.” Think of the darkness of that night, and yet the Lord is singing! His heart was delighting in God, and His joy was so great that He is joining the singing in that night. “They sang an hymn”—the Lord was with them. He could weep—we can understand that. Precious holy tears rightly put in the bottle of God, but He could also sing in the night.

Another feature of service in the night is set forth in the Song of Solomon. There are three score armed men—every one with swords, because of alarms in the night. The Lord Jesus is seen like that in that dark night, guarding every interest. Men came out with swords and staves to take Him, but there were those with Him whom God had given to Him, so precious to God; and the Lord said "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." He would protect them. He said "Let these go their way," and the enemies of Christ could not touch them. They went backward and fell to the ground in the presence of the Son of God. Then there was Satan's desire to have Peter, but there is the armed Warrior with His prayer to guard him. In that night He looks upon Peter, after he had denied Him, and recaptures his heart for God. He will not let Satan have Peter; He is standing by night as an armed man guarding the interests of God.

Now having said that, I want to apply it to ourselves. We are in the night. Another day is soon to come. The Sun of righteousness will soon arise with healing in His wings, and usher in a new day. Night is settling in upon Christendom. Man is turning away from God and from Christ—from the precious light of God. I dwell on it, for we want to have our eyes open to the truth of scripture. The apostle

says in Hebrews they "have trodden under foot the Son of God." It is morally a repetition of what was done when they spat upon Christ, and condemned Him and rejected Him. As is said in Hebrews 10 of such, "And hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing"—and "insulted the Spirit of grace." These words describe the darkness that is setting in, but what are we doing in the darkness? He would have us do what He did. We are not of the night, and we cannot be for the Lord in the night if we are marked by the same characteristics as those who are of the night. The position of the children of God is that they are not of the night, but are of the day. As the Lord says, "Ye are sons of light," but are we practically marked by features of the night? If so, may the Lord help us to judge them, so that we may be true to Him in the night.

The allowance of hatred or malice, an unforgiving spirit, or bitterness of heart, simply means that we are morally of the night, and therefore lose the greatest privilege we can have of being for the Lord in the night. The allowance of deception in any form, means that we are morally of the night. The apostle says, "having renounced the hidden things of dishonesty." Now let us face this, for if there is anything in our home life, our business life, or in our relations with one another that

is evil and unjudged, but hidden, we shall lose the most blessed privilege of being true to the Lord in the night. I would beg you young ones especially, to beware of anything you have to hide. When you feel you do not want a thing to be known, then deception will result, and if you do not judge it, you will miss being for the Lord. The moment we feel we do not want a thing to be known, we are coming under the power of darkness. I do not mean such things must be made known before all, but what needs to be hidden, should be judged, or it will rob us of the precious privilege of being for the Lord, because we cannot be *of* the night and be true to the Lord *in* the night.

The apostle Peter says, "Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings." If we envy another what he has—it may be his money, or his home, or his reputation, or it might be the esteem he has among the brethren, or his place in the local meeting, we pass morally into the night. That is the road that led to the crucifixion of Christ. That does not belong to the sons of the day, it belongs to the children of darkness. May the Lord help us to judge these principles in our hearts. The Lord would have us with the features that marked Him in the night. First, to weep.

I do not think we shall go far on the road I am seeking to indicate, if we do not weep;

that is, if we do not feel things. All the men of God wept. Moses wept as a babe. Nehemiah wept, so that the king, as he came before him said, "This is nothing else but sorrow of heart." David was a man of tears; he said, "Put thou my tears into thy bottle." Paul says, "I tell you weeping." The Lord would have us feel the condition of the assembly; the public dishonour brought upon His name now that we are approaching the days of apostasy. Weeping indeed, is suitable to the night.

Paul did not stop at weeping: Nehemiah did not stop there: David did not stop there. Paul wept for he felt things, but he also stood in faithful service in the house of God in the night. He was one of those servants who stand by night in the house of the Lord. See him in the gaol at Philippi, standing there at midnight going on with the service of God. "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them." His back beaten with stripes, his feet fast in the stocks, but he is serving God. The songs that God had given them were given back to Him from their hearts. They are also seen guarding the divine interests for they had been sent to the man of Macedonia. The gaoler takes a sword to kill himself, but Paul says, "Do thyself no harm for we are all here." That man is secured for God and for Christ.

Stephen too, how he felt the night. They gnashed upon him with their teeth—they ran upon him with one accord, yet in the midst of all, there he is, going on with the service of God, offering up to heaven the blessed fragrance of the holy incense, while his heart is filled with joy. He said, “I see the heavens opened.” He saw Jesus and the glory of God, and he said, “Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” He is going on with the service of God in the house of the Lord. He wants us to weep indeed, but the service of God must not stop. Let us stand by night in the house of the Lord so that the offerings go on. The fire on the altar was never to go out. Are we all contributing to it? God grant we may be.

You say, What can I offer? You can offer much. God values the bodies of His people; He wants them. While men of the world are dishonouring their bodies, let our bodies be laid on God’s altar, as a sacrifice acceptable to Him, which is our reasonable service. He wants the praises of our hearts; “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually.” Even if the night is dark, the fruit of our lips confessing His name is to continue. He is prepared to accept what you can give Him, even though outwardly it be but two mites that make a farthing. He is prepared

to accept it. The giving of the Philippians was "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." The scripture makes clear that certain things are not to be given to God,—such as "the price of a dog," Deut. 23. 18. What comes from an unholy association or from what is unclean, is not to be contributed to the treasury. The Lord does not want it, in fact, He will not have it. If behind the scenes, there is that which is unholy in our activities, in our occupations, in our business methods, and we propose to devote part of the gain resulting to the Lord, He will not accept it, and it is not a sacrifice acceptable to Him. But otherwise, He loves the offerings of His people and He wants them to continue.

Then there are the songs, and they are still to be sung. He gives songs—there are many of them. I cannot dwell on them in detail, but God gives songs in the night. The one song I had in mind is the hymn that follows the Lord's supper. That can still be sung—the affections of the saints rising up to God as they taste the sweetness of the love of God made known in the death of Christ—that of which the new covenant speaks to us. God says, "They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest," and as we become more and more acquainted with God and His love week by week, the Lord would have the

hymn still to be sung. That song is to go up in the night, from hearts that know the love of God.

Then at the end, we have the armed men standing round Solomon's bed. Solomon's bed represents that on which he rests in the midst of his people. The Lord has a resting place in the affections of His people. He had not where to lay His head when here, but He has a resting place now in the holy affections of His saints. He has a bed, and threescore armed men stand round and they have swords. They will not let anyone touch that bed. Who will interfere with the rest of Christ? How we can thank God for that rest! No false teaching—no unrighteous course allowed. Armed men are there to see that no one interferes with the rest of Christ in the affections of His people. We can reckon on that. If any disturber approaches that bed, these armed men have their swords and they are prepared to use them although it is the night. If we bring into the Christian company any unholy practice, or unholy teaching, sooner or later these armed men with their swords will have to be faced. We want to have part in this, and to use whatever power we may have to safeguard the precious interests of Christ in the night.

THE GOD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

2 *Timothy* 3. 1-5, 14-17; *chap.* 4. 6-12, 16-end

ONE desires, dear brethren, to say a word as to God being "the God of all encouragement," 2 Cor. 1. 3. That God should be known to us, His children, in these days of adversity, difficulty and sorrow, as the God of all encouragement should be great support whatever the pressure. Think of God undertaking to serve us in this way, that we might be encouraged! Satan is seeking to cause a spirit of despair to fill our hearts. When we take account of the development of things in Christendom, and indeed in the world, which are so appalling—and then in addition to these, taste the sorrows that are found amongst those that are able to walk together, from which none of us is exempt—these things are calculated to break our hearts, and Satan would use them to bring despair into our souls.

Well, the apostle says, "Be perfected, be encouraged . . . and the God of love and peace shall be with you," 2 Cor. 13. 11. God would be with an encouraged people, not a people in despair, and He would Himself contribute to the encouragement that we experience. If any man had ground for despair, humanly, it was Paul. When he wrote the second epistle to Timothy, he

was a prisoner under the most cruel power on earth—the power of Rome; he was in Rome, a prisoner with a chain. Then under those conditions, he has to say, “no man stood with me, but all men forsook me,” 2 Tim. 4. 16. Where three years of the most intense labour had been spent, where night and day he had laboured, in the province of Asia, yet he has to say—“all men forsook me.” It does not mean they had ceased to be Christians, but they had forsaken the apostle as the great vessel of the heavenly testimony. They had come down to a lower standard. Even some of his personal companions had forsaken him; he said, “Demas hath forsaken me.”

Then, dear brethren, false doctrines were working as a gangrene; they had come in and were working destruction in the area where he laboured so ardently, and the faith of some of the saints was overthrown. Looking ahead the apostle sees worse times coming. He sees juggling impostors waxing worse and worse. I would like you to note that word “juggling impostors.” Christendom is giving more and more place to those who juggle with the scriptures, and thus deceive simple souls. The apostle says they will get worse and worse, and the general moral conditions of mankind are expressed in the opening verses of the 3rd chapter of the 2nd epistle

to Timothy describing most accurately what exists to-day.

Paul says, "In the last days," showing that it was a matter of days in his mind, and the end would come. We have not to wait for centuries or even years for these conditions to arise; they are here now. The time is short; the last days are already here; the end is in view. In spite of all that to which I have referred, the great apostle says, "I am not ashamed"; he was not in despair! He was troubled at what he saw approaching, but he was not ashamed, and he said to Timothy in the light of all that, "be not thou therefore ashamed," 2 Tim. 1. 8. That is what we need to-day, to have the consciousness of what is stable and that we have power to meet all that is opposed, as the apostle said to Timothy, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power. . . ." 2 Tim. 1. 7.

The foundation of God stands and is going to remain; our feet can stand firmly and our hearts can rest in this stable position. If we could apprehend a little of what lay in the apostle's soul at this time, we would understand how he could be encouraged in spite of increasing difficulties as the days developed. There is a wonderful passage in Isaiah 33. 6, wherein it is said of God that "He shall be the stability of thy times,"—that is how it should read, I understand.

Whatever the times are, God would be known as the stability of our times. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms," Deut. 33. 27. God's arms, in that sense, are underneath His people. I have no doubt that the apostle Paul had that in his soul when he said, "I am not ashamed." He indicates in the epistle to Timothy, that he is resting on God and what He could be to him.

In writing to Titus he speaks of God as the "God that cannot lie." Then he refers to God's own "purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." It is according to the power of God that we stand firm, the God "who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace," 2 Tim. 1. 9. Whatever happens, whatever the public failure, whoever may depart, some like Demas may leave the path of testimony, others may turn away from the truth, but what is of God stands. Paul rested there in the most difficult times; God's purpose remains, and is to be the bulwark of our souls. The apostle was assured that what he had committed to Christ was safe, he said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day," 2 Tim. 1. 12. In the

2nd chapter he says, "the foundation of God standeth sure." He spoke of those whose faith was overthrown by false doctrines but he said the firm foundation of God stands. I have no doubt it refers to the blessed Person of Christ known in the souls of God's people—the great foundation for God, and that stands; everything "in Christ Jesus" remains.

Then he speaks of the seal, indicating that there is that which God will stand by and which has His authority. Men try to seal things. Jezebel put Ahab's seal on the document that meant Naboth's death, but God challenges that seal and the authority that lay behind it. As speaking with God's authority Elijah said, "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine," 1 Kings 21. 19. That was God's word to Ahab, and of what value was his seal? You see it again in Daniel's day. He was in the lion's den, the mouth of the pit is shut and the seal of the great Persian Empire is put on it, and that to them was the end. But God sends His angel. What is a Persian seal to one having authority from heaven! You see the point—man cannot really seal anything. Man's folly is seen when they sealed the tomb of Jesus. They got the seal from Pilate—the seal of Rome—and they put it on the sepulchre. They thought that

was final and authoritative, but an angel comes down and rolls away the stone, notwithstanding the seal. On the contrary when God seals anything, it stands, because it has His authority behind it.

This passage in 2 Tim. 2, indicates that if in the day of public failure we want to be in a path pleasurable to God, we must depart from evil. You say, what about all the Christians we leave behind? That is a matter for the Lord. He does not overlook one: "the Lord knoweth them that are his." That is *His* side of the seal. Our side is, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," verse 19. That is the final word from the Lord. That is our part in the seal, and no one can ignore it and have the Lord's support; such a movement has the authority of God. I would say to every Christian who may be linked with what is evil in the sight of God, Just look at the seal; "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity"; that is your side, and you have authority from God to act on it.

In this connection, the apostle refers to the "Master." As far as the apostle is concerned, whatever comes, he recognises his obligations to the Master, as One whose word is final and whose will is absolute. It is the Lord Jesus as the Master who would have every

believer as a vessel suitable for His use, but for this you must depart from iniquity, and also separate from vessels to dishonour. I would entreat you not to bring in any "buts"; being fit for the Master's use is dependent on departing from iniquity and separating from persons to dishonour. It is only in that way we can become vessels to honour. I know it will cost something; it will cost tears and suffering and reproach and hatred, but think of the great privilege of being pleasurable to God as a vessel to honour fit for the Master's use.

In order to be serviceable in that way for the Master, we need to be thoroughly acquainted with the teaching, and with the scriptures. The apostle had great confidence in the scriptures. He says to Timothy, "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures," and "all scripture is given by inspiration of God." He had great confidence in them; they are stable; they are given by inspiration of God. The right understanding of them is a great necessity for the thorough furnishing of the man of God unto all good works. That means he does not need to go outside them. If the scriptures are understood, and have their place, the man of God is thoroughly furnished; he does not need anything from man.

We should value all that has helped us to understand the scriptures, for such help

is from God, but we do not want anything outside the range of the scriptures in order to equip us for the service of God—the work of God. I speak particularly to young believers. We need to read the scriptures more, and to read them prayerfully. I am not speaking against ministry in relation to them, but we need to read the scriptures themselves. Let the mind and heart be stored with the precious scriptures. That will stand by us to the end. They are especially for the last days, and the apostle says, “Every scripture is divinely inspired,” or divinely breathed. That is what makes the scriptures what they are. Books by the hundred have been written against the scriptures, and many of them have long since gone into oblivion, thank God! But the scriptures remain; their voice remains; their authority remains. Behind the letter of the scripture, there is the breath of God.

What is it that makes all the difference between a man and a horse? It may be true as we are told, that in certain features both are alike. But what is it that makes the difference between a man and any other creature? The breath of God. Nobody, of course, can see this breath, but it is that which lifts man above the level of an animal. What is it that elevates the precious scriptures entirely above every other book? The breath of God. Every scripture is divinely inspired

—divinely breathed. God has put behind the letter of the word, His own breath. It has come from His mouth, and that is what makes the scriptures what they are, and they remain in their integrity, their blessedness, and their power and their service for the man of God, right down to the last days. The apostle laid great store by every scripture.

In the last chapter of 2 Timothy, Paul says, "I am already being poured out." The end is at hand, but what is supporting him? The Lord's appearing and His kingdom are before his heart. He speaks of those who love His appearing. Looking West, I may say, he sees the sun setting and the closing days of Christendom in its public aspect, going down in unspeakable blackness—the "blackness of darkness." Then he looks East, and he sees there is another day coming. The Sun is going to arise and bring in a new day. Christ is to appear. He is to come up. That is what is supporting Paul in the dark day, he has in view the Lord's appearing and kingdom. He is one of those that "love his appearing" and he says, "The Lord, the righteous judge," will give me at that day, "a crown of righteousness, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

He was leaving the judgment of his own service and its results to the "righteous Judge," he is prepared to await His judgment. Many

are the difficulties that arise on account of certain ones wanting judgment now, wanting to be vindicated now, and to have it proved that they are right. But the great apostle was prepared to leave the judgment of his whole course to the righteous Judge in that day. If evil arises amongst God's people it must be judged, all must judge it, and judge themselves; but to seek our own vindication now in order that we should be recognised will only cause endless trouble and sorrow amongst the people of God. The apostle says, I can leave mine to the righteous Judge and await His time.

I would appeal to you, dear brethren, to leave every petty personal grievance to the Lord. The valuation of our service is in the hands of the righteous Judge and in view of that day. The day will come when He will make known to you, and maybe to others, what He does think of these matters, but in the meantime let us love His appearing, not seeking prominence for ourselves but His glory. It says, "Every morning doth he bring his judgments to light," Zeph. 3. 5. He may keep you a year, He may keep you ten, or until the judgment seat, in His wisdom, but morning by morning, His judgments come to light, and the apostle was content to leave the whole matter as to himself personally in the hands of the righteous Judge.

The waiting time till that day is to test us as to His appearing. Do we love His appearing? When He appears He is coming up like the sun. To-morrow morning, please God, when the sun comes up it will take charge of the day; no one can dispute it. God made the sun to rule the day. The sun is master of the day and its will prevails for the day. The earth just yields to the power of the sun, it would go to ruin if it did not. Now, says the apostle, Christ is coming in like the sun. In Matthew 17 we read that "his face did shine as the sun," and there are those who *love* His appearing,—who love the day when there will be only one will; when Christ as absolute Monarch will govern the scene. Do we love that day, dear brethren? There is nothing mysterious about this. If I love that day I shall be in accord with it now.

You see if I love the day when Christ's will will be absolute and will govern all, I shall prove it by obeying that will now; I will prove it by being in subjection to the Lord now. It is no good telling me you love that day if you are doing as you like now,—going where you like, saying what you like, reading what you like, and then saying, "I do wish the Lord would come so that His will should be supreme in the earth." To say that I am longing for the appearing, and yet do

exactly what I like until the day comes is entirely false. To say we love His appearing and not obey Him now, is a denial, and the apostle says, "If we deny him, he also will deny us," 2 Tim. 2. 12. The apostle speaks of those who love His appearing and says that they are to have a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge will give them in that day.

There is something else Paul has to tell us for our encouragement. He says, "at my first answer no man stood with me." The great apostle, no doubt used of God for the conversion and enlightenment of thousands, stood alone. In Corinth the Lord said to him, "I have much people in this city." But now Paul says, "at my first answer no man stood with me. . . . Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me," 2 Tim. 4. 16-17. Whatever the crises that arise as the days pass and the Lord yet tarries, we may be assured that the Lord is available, and will stand by His testimony, and with everyone that is true to it. Whatever comes—whatever sorrow or distress, whatever heart-breaking, if we have to stand in front of the lion's mouth, as the apostle did—there was a lion's mouth ready to devour him—the Lord will stand by us! The Lord would give us this assurance, that if we are true to His testimony, He will stand by us and will deliver us from every evil work.

Then he says, "Luke only is with me." I think that is most beautiful. The apostle tells us in another place what he thought of Luke. He says, "Luke, the beloved physician"; the man that was used to bring in healing and recovery is with the apostle. The Lord sees to it that if the truth is held and what is due to Him is maintained at all cost, the service of such as Luke will be there to bring in healing where it is needed, and to recover those who have gone astray. Do not lower the standard and say that will recover them. That is always the tendency. Some say, Let us lower the standard and that will make room for recovery. It will make things worse. Stand alone in the maintenance of what is due to the Lord, if needs be, as the apostle did, and somehow or other, the Lord will see that a Luke is there, and that recovered persons like Mark become available. Mark is a man that is recovered, he joined the apostle and Barnabas early in the testimony, but as the difficulties arose he went back, and gave up. As recovered, the apostle is able to say, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry," 2 Tim. 4. 11. If there is one that feels like that—a Mark—one who once had a place in the Lord's service but has dropped out, the Lord would bring you under His gracious healing power. He would bring

healing balm to your heart, so that you should yet have part in the service of God before the end.

The apostle sends greetings to the saints, showing that true and holy affections remained in his heart, unquenched by all the opposition, and others shared in these. The salutations were true, fervent, and holy. "Salute Prisca and Aquila," and then he names others, showing that in spite of the dark day, there was a circle known to the apostle where holy salutations and true affections are known. The Lord will keep that circle to the end. Whether you or I will be in it is a matter we have to face with the Lord, but there will be preserved true affections between the saints, whose salutations one to the other, are in accord with heaven. It may be in a limited way—the apostle could not greet all, but he names some whom he can greet, and these mutual salutations and affections between the saints in one place and another are still preserved in this day.

One just desires that the greatness of these things found in this closing epistle and in the closing words of Paul, may encourage us as we realise more what there is which remains secure, so that our hearts may be strengthened whatever may be ahead for us. May we be thus stable in our souls and have joy in our hearts which can never be taken

away from us, so that as thus encouraged, we may go on to the end. I do not know of anything more encouraging than the Lord's word to Philadelphia, "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." What has been recovered of the enjoyment of the privileges of the assembly although in weakness, yet, in reality and spiritual affections, will go on. The Lord has set before us an opened door, and no one can shut it.

May the Lord keep us that each may have part in it; and may we be delivered from that which assumes to have all, but of which He is outside. The greatest danger at the present moment is the spirit of Laodicea that assumes to have everything that is of God, saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," but to which the Lord as outside, says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." The Lord preserve us from having these things merely in an external way while He Himself is outside; but may He grant that however weak and feeble we may be, there may be that to which He can give His presence,—for His name's sake.

BUYING AND SELLING

Acts 20. 28; *Matthew* 13. 44-46; *Acts* 4. 36, 37;
Acts 5. 1-11; *Revelation* 3. 14-22

THE Spirit of God through the prophet Ezekiel seems to make clear what many have overlooked, that Satan is really behind the commercial world. Tyre in scripture represents the world of commerce, and the prophet discloses, by the Spirit, that behind its king, that is its authority and power, is Satan himself. That I believe to be the import of the word in Ezekiel 28. The king of Tyre, doubtless as associated with God's people Israel, is there said to be the anointed cherub that was in "Eden, the garden of God." He was set there as a protective covering, but because of the multitude of his merchandise, everything was corrupted. He used the position of power and glory and trust that was committed to him, to acquire by commercial means, a glory and power that only resulted in pride. This spirit is also seen in the king of Babylon, in Isaiah 14, another representative of satanic pride. He says, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will be like the Most High." The Spirit of God has used these kings as figures, to make clear that Satan himself is behind the great world of commerce as also the

world of idolatry. All the selfishness, the cruelty, the greed, the falsehood, which marks Satan's world, has its origin in himself. It is well to remember that.

In speaking of the world of commerce, I am not of course referring to the ordinary buying and selling in relation to the necessities of life, but to the great commercial system marked by greed and pride and cruelty—sometimes dreadful cruelty: behind all that is enthroned the devil himself. Those of us who have to touch it, need to remember this, lest we get drawn into its vortex, lest our minds and spirits and souls get drawn into this great system over which the devil rules. The Lord speaks of Satan as “the ruler of this world,” and the apostle says “the god of this world”; these are most important things to recognise. With the Lord's help I want to touch on buying and selling according to God, so that our spirits might come under the influence of another world, and of other principles.

In Acts 20, the apostle speaks of God Himself “purchasing.” He says “the church of God, which he has purchased,” not with His own blood—that is not the correct rendering—but “with the blood of his own.” That is quite a different thing. The idea of death could not possibly apply to God as God. That is clear from the general teaching of

scripture, and while our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was Himself God in Person, yet scripture invariably speaks of His death, as that of a Man: not that it was unreal, for *that Person* who "became flesh" died. Scripture speaks of the "death of his (God's) Son." God's Son died. Immortality is inherent in God alone, so that it cannot be said that God died. The apostle's word in Acts 20, refers to the death of God's Son, He was God's Own, the assembly has been purchased with the blood of His Own. What a wonderful transaction that must be! What value must God put upon His assembly, that He would purchase it at such a price! There are those who say, I am not interested in the assembly, I am only interested in the gospel. How little such persons understand the thoughts and feelings of God. The apostle understood when he told the elders that God had purchased the assembly "with the blood of his own." If God put such a price upon His assembly, if it is of such value to Him that He would purchase it at such infinite cost, does it not claim the profoundest interest, the most ardent affection and the most diligent service of every believer?

I would for a moment dwell on the price that God has paid to have the assembly for Himself. The assembly is so great with God, that He is going to secure glory to Himself

“in the assembly in Christ Jesus, unto all generations of the age of ages,” Eph. 3. 21. What a wonderful thought for us, that God is to have glory to Himself, a glory that will never diminish, but will continue throughout all the generations of the age of ages, and it is to be in the assembly—the assembly over which Christ is Head. The apostle says, “That now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church (assembly) the manifold wisdom of God,” Eph. 3. 10. This assembly is composed of those who are the sons of God, the brethren of Christ. God is to have in His assembly, innumerable sons who are intelligent in His mind and who respond to His heart, as being that which “he hath purchased with the blood of his own.”

I do not know any word in scripture that expresses in so forceful a way what is the secret value of the assembly to God. It ought to appeal to us more and more—“the blood of his own.” Think of the Lord Jesus Christ as His own! With what delight God could look down upon Him here on earth, for it clearly refers to that, “his own,” is Christ in manhood here—God’s Son—His Only-begotten. In what manifold ways God’s delight was evident. First of all He could say, “This is my beloved son.” God could identify Him in this way among men, and to

the Lord Himself comes the word, "Thou art my beloved son, in thee I have found my delight." Through the prophet Isaiah God calls our attention to Him and says, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. 42. 1. Matthew understood it as he referred to the fulfilment of it in Jesus, Matt. 12. 18. The apostle Peter says of Christ that He was "chosen of God and precious." David in Psalm 2, tells us of Him, and the disciples in Acts 4 referring to this, speak to God of His Christ,—“the kings of the earth stood up . . . against the Lord, and against his Christ,” Acts 4. 26. That blessed anointed Man was the One whom Paul designated as “His own”—God’s own.

In understanding something of what Christ was to God, we come to realise the value of the assembly to God, for God has given up that precious life in order to have for Himself the assembly. He has purchased it “with the blood of his own.” How this should make us realise the great value that God sets upon His assembly, the apostle is using this to encourage the overseers to feed the flock of God, to lay down their lives in service to that which is so precious to the heart of God. One desires, dear brethren, that something of that may enter into the heart of everyone of us so that we may live for God and His assembly, as realising more the preciousness

of that which God has purchased with "the blood of his own."

Coming to Matthew 13, we have the Lord presented as selling and buying. I do not refer now to the treasure, wonderful as that is, but I have the pearl particularly in mind. The Lord speaks of Himself under the figure of a merchant-man: He uses a commercial expression, applying it to Himself. The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man, and the activities of a merchant man are to buy and sell, but the Lord here reverses the order, He sells and then He buys. What did He sell? It says, "He sold all that he had." What for? To buy the pearl of great price, to have something that was of exceptional value to Himself. That is what a pearl is. People do not buy pearls to use them in the ordinary matters of life; they do not buy them for what service they can render, they buy them for their intrinsic value and for adornment. It says, "when he found one pearl of great price went and sold all that he had and bought it."

That pearl of great price was composed of those who were drawn to Christ here and who loved Him. He found it in the love of His disciples, of Martha, and of the family of Bethany. The love of Mary prompted her to pour out the precious ointment upon Him, even as that unnamed woman who anointed His head in the house

of Simon the leper. These affections were the evidence of the presence of the one pearl—there were like affections in all their hearts hence they were one—it evidenced the work of God in their souls. The pearl is the aggregate of this work. In the work of God evidenced in those who followed the Lord, He saw anticipatively the whole pearl—the assembly which God Himself valued, yes, purchased “with the blood of his own.” But in Matthew 13, we see the Lord’s side of the purchasing.

In order to have these affections set together as one—for they were really one, the nucleus of the assembly which is His body—He gave Himself, that is, “sold all that he had.” It is like a man adorning himself with his wife, for the normal position is that the wife is the adornment of her husband, as the apostle says, “the woman is the glory of the man,” 1 Cor. 11. 7, so the Lord finds in the affections of His own, that which shall be for His glory. As He said in John 17. 10, “I am glorified in them.” Thus He found the pearl, and He went and sold everything that He had.

You say, He must love the assembly to sell all that He had? He does. Scripture says, “He was rich”—“Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich,” 2 Cor. 8. 9. All that by title belonged to the Lord Jesus as

Man here, He surrendered by going into death in order to have the assembly. All that God placed under Adam as head of the creation, all that was Israel's, Christ as the rightful King of Israel, had title to; in fact, everything that God had given to man—life, glory, authority, man's whole inheritance—all was the inheritance of Christ. He had established His title to live and therefore all was His. He did not sell what belonged to Him in the Godhead; that could never be sold. It does not say that He gave all that He had, but that He sold it to enable Him to secure the pearl for His own heart for ever. The thought of selling is brought in to suggest the surrender of what He already valued.

I commend it to our hearts for consideration in order that we may understand the value of the assembly to Christ. That which He had here was of more value than we can ever compass,—and who valued it as Christ did? In the language of Psalm 16, He said, "Yea, I have a goodly heritage." The understanding of this calls for the same kind of surrender and devotedness in all our hearts in relation to that which is precious to Christ. I wonder whether we are ready for it? He wants the same spirit at the end, as that which marked the saints at the beginning. In Acts 4, the saints at the beginning were ready to lay down everything; it says, "neither said any of them

that ought of the things which he possessed was his own." Thus, dear brethren, these things indicate to us the kind of buying and selling that the Lord would have continued. One feels this really lay behind the act of Barnabas. He had lands and he sold them. He need not have sold them; nobody commanded him to sell them, but something of what we have touched upon—that God had purchased the assembly with "the blood of his own," and that Christ had "sold all that he had" to have the assembly—something of that came into the heart of Barnabas, and, having lands, he went and sold them and laid the price at the feet of the apostles, for the service of God in the assembly. As a result of this, the apostles gave Barnabas a name.

This passage shows how names that abide are obtained. People seek after names to-day—that is poor work! Men will sacrifice their all upon the altar of fame to get a name that will perish in a few hours. Barnabas got a name that will abide, and which heaven recognises. He got it by sacrifice. That road to divine approval and recognition is still wide open for every believer. Not many take it. The Lord Jesus secured His name by surrender and death—He has a name above every name. It says He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. That was the extent of His sacrifice in obedience

to the will of God: "wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."

Barnabas made the sacrifice, and the brethren gave him a name; they called him "the son of consolation." Ananias and Sapphira thought also to secure a name without sacrifice, and God's judgment came upon them. We all need to judge this, perhaps young men especially. The young men are brought into the matter here, no doubt to suggest the need of their learning the lesson. The young men carry out both Ananias and Sapphira, as much as to say, they must feel the burden of this for their own education. The attempt to get a name amongst the people of God except through sacrifice will lead to the judgment of God. Sacrifice that is real and that which God recognises, must not be merely external.

I commend this to the young men especially. because if they remain and the Lord tarry, and they take up the service of the Lord in a pleasurable way, these lessons must be learned. Let us be content, dear brethren, that our names are written in heaven, and in response to the grace thus shown to us, see that we are amongst the saints of God on the principle of sacrifice, and as surrendering all that we have, let us first yield our bodies to God—sacrifice starts there. God does not want your money nor your time, unless He first

has your body. The apostle says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice," Rom. 12. 1. It is the body—the whole man; it includes all the members, the whole vessel, retaining no part for yourself. We must face that if we wish to contribute to what is of God. If we would follow the example of Barnabas, we must face this, for everything that is of value in heaven and amongst the people of God, is secured on the line of sacrifice.

The Lord brings us face to face with this principle of surrender on the first day of every week. The Lord "the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread," 1 Cor. 11. 23. Each scripture that refers to the supper, brings in the betrayal of the Lord. You cannot separate this from the Lord's supper, for the Spirit of God has joined them together. Now the betrayal of the Lord was a commercial act. We read that they weighed the silver, and Judas made the contract. Outwardly, he had a link with the Lord, he went about with Him, and was recognised as one of His disciples. The Psalmist speaks of him prophetically and says, "we went up to the house of God together." Judas heard the Lord pray; he had thus what few on earth have ever had. He had all this outwardly but his valuation of the Lord was expressed in the act of

covenanting with the Jewish leaders for the thirty pieces of silver.

You may enquire, What has all that to do with us? When the Lord said, "One of you shall betray me," Matt. 26. 21, Peter said, "Lord, is it I?" They owned in that question that their hearts were such that they could do it. I believe the Lord would have us to face this question again and again. What is our valuation of the Lord? That is the question. The Spirit of God raises it through the prophet Zechariah. He says, "If ye think well, give me my price; and if not, forbear." In business, in our domestic relations as husband and wife, or parents and children, in our friendships, in our reading, the Lord is saying to us every day, "If ye think well, give me my price." For what will you part with communion with the Lord? What will you give in exchange for His support? For what will you part with your place of liberty in the house of God? Do not evade it. Let us face it honestly. We cannot go on with unrighteousness in our business life and be at home with the Lord and His people.

I do not mean that we may not be at the meetings, and even partake of the Lord's supper, but we cannot enjoy what is available to us while we go on with unrighteousness. The Lord would say to everyone again and

again, "If ye think well, give me my price." Are we going to be like Esau, who, for a mess of pottage sold his birthright? What a birthright a saint has! The fulness of the blessing of God is available to him. Esau preferred a few minutes pleasure and self-gratification to the blessing of God. There came a day when he wanted the birthright back, but he could not get it. Many wake up when too late to the fact that they have missed the blessing of God—their present inheritance among them that are sanctified, and too late to be available to God.

If I am addressing anyone who is going on with what is known to be wrong, if you are in principle, selling the Lord, may He help you to judge it before it is too late. With Judas though filled with remorse, his act was irrevocable, for there was nothing there for God. The Lord had spoken to Judas indirectly among the disciples about the one who should betray Him, but Judas was entertaining covetous principles; he was a thief and had the bag. He allowed covetousness a place in his heart until the devil took possession of him. We should all learn to judge these covetous, unrighteous movements in their beginnings, otherwise we are in danger of parting with the blessed Lord and the fellowship of His people for worldly gain. Parting with the eternal and precious things of God,

for something in the way of advantage in this world.

The Lord would continually appeal to each one of us as to our valuation of Him. In Revelation 3. 18, the Lord says, "I counsel thee to buy of me"—whatever the state of His people—poor, wretched, miserable, naked, blind. He does not say I will give, but "I counsel thee to buy of me, gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see." This great Merchantman has wonderful stores! The bride in the Song of Songs has "all the powders of the merchant"; all the fragrant odours that come from her were procured from Him. How we love the fragrance of Christ as it is discerned in His own.

Think of Stephen—even to this day the odour remains—the fragrant incense of his closing words—he secured it from Christ. Who is the Merchant that has all these fragrant powders? Stephen had paid the price, and so, too, Paul and Silas in the prison of Philippi. What fragrance goes up—and it abides to this day. The bride, the Lamb's wife will have all the powders of the Merchant, for the fragrance that is proper to Christ will pervade the assembly; but she has to buy it.

It is secured as what is of man after the flesh is surrendered and judged. The buying involves that we judge in ourselves the glory of man and of this world which are worthless, in order to have the gold tried in the fire. The glory of man and the glory of this world are to be surrendered and judged, if we are to have the gold tried in the fire, and the white raiment which the Lord offers. As we allow the Lord to expose the filthy garments we see them in their true character, those unholy ways in which we may have been clothed.

The Lord wants us to face and judge these things, and in that way pay the price for the white raiment that He sells. And then eye-salve that we may really see—that we may have spiritual vision. May the Lord help us to make room for this kind of buying and selling, that He may give us a right estimate of the price He has paid for the assembly. May we be more prepared to sell what we have and use it as sacrificed to the glory of His blessed name. We have in Judas and in Joseph's brethren solemn warning of how we may act in regard to Christ. Joseph's brethren heedless of his agony, and heedless of the effect upon him or upon Jacob, his father, sold him to the Ishmaelites. How the Lord felt the action of Judas! In the language of the Psalmist He said, "it was not an enemy

. . . then I could have borne it." Touching words!

The Lord takes account of what enemies do in a very different light; it was when we were enemies Christ died for us, but Judas was in the place of a friend. Those of us who are professedly friends of Christ, who are known publicly in that way, let us think of the heartlessness of one who would sell our blessed Lord! The Lord help us to judge the initial movement that would make room for Satan's activities in our hearts. May we each say in self-judgment, "Lord, is it I?" And then if we are made sensible of need and poverty, let us hearken to the Lord who says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed . . . and eye-salve that thou mayest see."

May the Lord help us that buying and selling according to God might mark His people, and that we may not be dominated by that great commercial system of Tyre over which Satan is ruler.

FOLLOWING THE LORD TO BETHEL, JERICHO AND THROUGH JORDAN

John 2. 13-17; *Luke* 18. 35-43; *Luke* 19. 1-7;
John 11. 1-16

I DESIRE, dear brethren, with the Lord's help to speak of Elijah's visits to Bethel, to Jericho, and to Jordan, and to point out how they portray the movements of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord chose the disciples that they might be with Him, that He might send them forth, but firstly, that they might be with Him. As Elisha was with Elijah, so the Lord chose His own to be with Him, moving from position to position with Him, so that they might see how He did things, that they might see the power that was resident in Him, and the grace of which He was full. I desire to call attention to the Lord as in relation to those three positions.

In John 2, the Lord comes into the temple, He speaks of it as "my Father's house," and thus regards it in the light of the house of God which Bethel stands for; and He acts there in accordance with the house of God, and maintains the holiness of that house; as it is said "holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever." The Lord coming into the temple and the disciples with Him, sees a corrupt condition of things, He sees God's

house turned into a house of merchandise, men trading in the things of God for gain, and it says, "He made a scourge of small cords and drove them all out," and the disciples remembered that it was written of Him, "The zeal of thy house hath devoured me." His action there cast light upon the scripture for them, so that they "remembered" what was written as to Him in Psalm 69. What impressions would come into the hearts of the disciples as they saw the Lord act thus, so fittingly. They understood the zeal of the Lord for the house of God, a zeal that later was to mark them.

As recorded in Matthew and Mark, He followed His action with speaking and teaching; and Mark tells us, "He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer?" Mark 11. 17. They were being educated as to these features of the house of God so that when the Lord left them here, they would know how to behave. Who could hear the Lord pray as the disciples did in Luke 11, without getting a deep impression of what it is to draw near to God? Luke says that the Lord was praying in a certain place—that was setting forth what was proper to the house of God. In one sense, wherever He was, there was the house of God. He said, "Destroy this temple"—He was the

temple Himself. "As he was praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said, Lord teach us to pray." We are not told what He said on that occasion, but they were impressed, and wanted to know how to pray. In John 17, we are told *what* He said, so that we can, as it were, to this day, stand in the house of God and understand the greatness of the service of prayer as set forth in the Lord Jesus. What fragrance there is in that prayer as the Lord "lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come." The disciples heard that and would learn much from it. They learned in the company of the Lord thus how to act in Bethel, and they learned it effectually.

In the beginning of the Acts after receiving the Spirit, as those who saw Him go up, they acted as He acted. When an attempt is made to bring merchandise into the house of God, when Ananias and Sapphira in principle come to trade in the house of God, and to buy a reputation for themselves where the Spirit of God is, Peter at once challenges them and says, "Why has Satan put it into thy heart to lie against the Holy Ghost?" There is no grace, no mercy for them, for they were trading in the temple. In Mark, it says, the Lord "would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple," Mark 11. 16. Ananias comes with such a thing, something covered and hidden, not brought

into the light, and not in keeping with the light of the house of God, and Peter who had learned in the company of Christ, is now able to meet this condition with a zeal that was in keeping with the house of God. He says to Ananias, "Why has Satan filled thy heart that thou shouldest lie to the Holy Spirit?" To Sapphira, who comes in later, he says, "Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? and she said, Yea, for so much." Peter said, "Why is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Lo, the feet of those that have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out."

Where is the grace, you may say? There is none. "They shall carry thee out." An absolute statement of judgment upon such as turn the house of God into a house of merchandise; such as bring secret packages into the temple. The Lord with a whip of small cords, drove them out, and in His Spirit, Peter does the same. On the other hand, how blessed to hear the disciples pray! The service of God is threatened by the elders of the Jews, and the disciples are commanded not to preach in the name of Christ, but they answer by resorting to prayer, and we are told what they pray. They say, "Lord, thou art the God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them

. . . give to thy bondmen with all boldness to speak thy word." God answered that by a fresh evidence of power, and the scripture says, the house "was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," Acts 4. 31.

The next point of education is Jericho, the disciples had been there with the Lord—that lawless, self-willed city, a monument of the defiance of the human heart to God. Jesus comes near that city—into the city where darkness reigned, where pride manifested itself, where man was in utter destitution and need. The condition of Jericho, morally, was expressed in the blind beggar—darkness, poverty, wretchedness, and the Lord goes there and brings to that city, the grace of heaven; the blind beggar received it, but that grace was for the city. Though He was despised there and regarded as Jesus the Nazarene, yet He passed through the city, carrying into the midst of such wickedness, the grace of heaven. He entered and passed through Jericho, and finds there a rich man, Zacchaeus. He wanted to see Jesus, who He was, so he climbed a tree. He had a good motive, but he had to learn that climbing, which is characteristic of Jericho, will not help him; he must come down. The Lord says to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." He does

not rebuke him nor ignore him. He looked up and saw Zacchaeus. Think of the Lord having to look up at anyone, what a position! The Lord says in effect, I have come down; indeed He was descending to death at that moment, to Jerusalem where He would be insulted and spit upon and crucified. He would descend even to the lower parts of the earth. So Zacchaeus "made haste and came down." It is never right to climb; "he that exalteth himself shall be abased." The Lord in coming into Jericho was on the road down to death. "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. 2. 8. It was thus that He brought the grace of heaven to man.

The disciples having learned how to act at Jericho, go as recorded in the early part of the Acts, to Jerusalem. Morally, it had become as Jericho. The Lord was crucified in Jerusalem, and Peter says to the people of that city, You have been the betrayers and murderers of Christ. In answer to his charge, they say, "What shall we do?" He says, "Repent and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins." He brings to that wicked city, that lawless city, the grace of God, the grace of heaven. "Repent and be baptised each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the

Holy Spirit." Such is to be our attitude in the midst of the increasing wickedness of this world, it is to be one of grace.

In the eleventh chapter of John's gospel, the Lord is approaching Jordan; He is about to deal with death in regard to its power over one of those whom He loved—Lazarus. He is drawing near the banks of Jordan. He said, "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes I was not there, to the intent ye may believe," John 11. 14-15. If He had been there, they would not have seen the glory of God in the way the Son of God could take out of the Jordan—that is, out of death,—one whom He loved. Thomas says, "Let us also go that we may die with him." They realise He is approaching death, yes, that if He went to Judea, He must face death. They were to learn that He had power to meet death, first, in regard of His loved ones, and finally, in His own Person to break its power. So they go and see Him deal with the power of Jordan, not in regard to Himself yet—they see that soon after—but in regard to Lazarus, dead, and buried, and corrupt; dead four days. They see that blessed One by the power of His own word, bring Lazarus out of death. What lessons they were learning. You see Peter in the Acts in the gain of it, when as far as he knew, he himself was right on the banks of the Jordan, about to be put

to death, as James had been, by Herod. It says, "Peter was sleeping between two soldiers"—even if he had to face death, he was at rest. The Jordan held no terrors for Peter. He had seen the Lord break the power of death over Lazarus, yea, he had seen the true Elijah cross over when the Lord went into death and overthrew it. Peter sleeps in the calm confidence of one who knows how to face death.

You see this in all its beauty in Stephen, a man with an object for his heart in heaven, and his moral being was filled, his vessel was full of the Holy Spirit. He suggests one who knows how to behave himself in the house of God; as he speaks to his accusers with irresistible power and wisdom, he says, "O stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit," Acts 7. 51. Then, "he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God," Acts 7. 55. As representing a true priest in the house of God, he brings out the glory that is to fill the house. It is while he thus serves that he kneels down and prays—his behaviour in the house of God is entirely in keeping with Christ, as in Luke 23. He acts in keeping with the Lord at Jericho, and though they rushed at him and gnashed on

him with their teeth, though they stoned him, yet the grace of heaven to lawless man finds its expression in his prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And then, dear brethren, in the consciousness of the power of Christ in meeting death—in the crossing of the Jordan—he prays, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Having said this, he fell asleep.

May we be encouraged to be with the Lord in these ways. If we are to be brought into the testimony, it is essential we must be with Him, that He might send us forth. What causes weakness and spiritual poverty with us is that in the secret of our lives we know but little of what it is to be with Him, and see Him in every position which He adorns so blessedly, and in this way learn from Him how to move in the various situations we have to meet.

THE GREATNESS OF THE ONE WHO IS OUR MODEL

John 3. 34, 35; *Luke* 10. 22; *John* 13. 1-17

I WOULD like, dear brethren, to say a little on the thought of a model or example. The youngest knows that things are learned more quickly and effectually by the consideration of a model, than by mere exposition. If what is being taught can be portrayed in a model, the mind takes it in far more readily. Those who are teachers will confirm that, and we know it from our own experience. It is evident that God teaches like that; He brings before us living examples. The apostle Peter speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ in that way, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." The apostle Paul, who was also a great teacher—a teacher of the nations—says, "mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample," *Phil.* 3. 17.

As he went from place to place, he was himself a model of what was in the mind of God to be learned, so that he could say to the elders of Ephesus, "I have shewed you all things," *Acts* 20. 35. As part of the teaching, he says, "these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." He could lift up his hands and say "these hands," not his tongue merely,

but these hands. So the apostle could say to Timothy as one who was to fill the ranks, "let no one despise thy youth, but be thou a model of the believers," 1 Tim. 4. 12. That does not mean that he said in word, You must not despise me, but that he so acted that they could not despise him. As being a model of the truth he preached, they would have no occasion to despise him.

That is needed to-day in our households. Sometimes parents mourn the loss of their children who turn aside to the world. Have we been models? I speak sympathetically, as one who under God owes more perhaps to one's parents than anyone else. Have we been models to our children? All the talk possible avails nothing if what is said is not expressed in our lives. So in the gatherings of the saints, how much we owe to those who are models. Such are needed, and God uses them in the gatherings of His people. I want to speak of the Lord in that light. He says in John 13. 15, "I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

What a wonderful model we have in the Lord at every period of His life here. There was in Him the setting forth of perfect humanity from the outset, in every human circumstance. He went down to Nazareth—

a poor contemptible place—not amongst the aristocracy of that day, but amongst the poor, in a town that was reproached and despised. He did not desire to move into better quarters, He went down to Nazareth, and it says, He was subject to His parents. He stands out thus from the commencement in perfect holy humanity under the eye of God. When in the temple He said to Mary, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” the Lord by that indicated that it should have been known, as a result of His twelve years with them.

Then you see Him at thirty, in full manhood, a model for all, especially young men about to take up the Lord’s service. He was waiting till heaven brought Him forward. John the Baptist says, “I knew him not,” but heaven knew Him. God had said to John, “Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him, the same is he that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost: and I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God,” John 1. 33-34. But up till then, John said, “I knew him not.” The Lord waited those thirty years for heaven to distinguish Him. What a model for young men! Waiting too, for John the Baptist’s ministry to precede Him, for John spoke first. And as He comes forward He is praying. That is the thing for young men, not to be self-reliant, nor

filled with a sense of one's strength, but praying—that is, expressing dependence upon God.

In John 13, we have the Lord as Model, in His supreme magnificence. The first scripture we read, says, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." The Father is God known in grace and love, and the things belonging to God thus revealed, are put into the hands of the Son because He loves Him. What greatness is there, what supreme greatness! We hear to-day of some great men who have much in their hands. The modern Dictators practically control all the offices and resources of a nation. Such must be great among men. But how insignificant is all they control compared with the Father's things, all that relates to God known in grace and goodness and love. How small such men are compared with Christ. It says, "The Father loveth the Son and has given all things into his hand."

I want to dwell on some of these things, so that we may appreciate more the action of washing the disciples' feet. God having put all things into the hands of the Son would impress us with the greatness of the Son. In chapter 4 of this gospel, the Lord speaks of giving living water, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life,"—bringing satisfaction to the hearts of all who drink of

it. This is in the hands of the Lord Jesus. If anyone wants living water, there is no one else to go to for it, because it is put in the hands of Christ. As the Lord indicates to the Samaritan woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him and he would have given thee living water," this means that He had control of the living water. Even though He had asked this woman for a drink yet if she would ask of Him, He would give her the living water.

In chapter 5 it says, "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." There is no one else in the universe in that position. It says the Father hath given to the Son to have life in Himself, clearly viewing Christ as Man. He has life in Himself and can impart life to whom He will. As the Father quickens, so the Son quickens "whom he will." Most wonderful statement! Every Christian is a proof that the blessed Lord—the Son of God, has power to impart life, to breathe life into the souls of men. It is as Life-Giver that it says in John 20, that "he breathed into them." Think of such an One with life in His hands—controlling life.

Then it says, of the Father, that "He hath given him authority to execute judgment also,

because he is Son of man." Think of One into whose hands all judgment is given; the judgment of everything is in the hands of Christ. All must appear before the judgment seat of Christ; He is the Judge who will review the course of everyone, in order to convey to us what met with His approval, and what did not; to "receive the things done in his body . . . whether it be good or bad." Then He will judge the professing church, spueing out of His mouth that which is false. He will judge Babylon, the great corrupt religious world. He is going to judge all nations; He is going to judge the wicked, for "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son," John 5. 22. Then you find in chapter 17, that the Lord says, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh." That is a marvellous thing. Nobody on earth has authority over all flesh, but the Lord has. That means, mankind everywhere; He has authority given to Him and He can exercise that authority in New Zealand, Norway, China, or Africa. It is not just over one nation that He has authority, but over all flesh. It is given to Him.

The Lord speaks in the same chapter of the "words which thou gavest me," He says, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." All that was in the mind

of the Father to communicate to men has been given to Christ, that is to say, every detail of the divine mind was entrusted to Christ to make known. Think of One who could be entrusted with every thought of God! As David says, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them they are more in number than the sand,"—yet every one of them has been given to the Lord as He says, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." Then the Lord says, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." That is the Father's work—not the works of creation. Every detail of God's work undertaken by the Son as He came into manhood is completed up to that moment, and He says, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Then the Lord speaks of "the men which thou gavest me." Think of all the men that belong to God: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." While primarily referring to the twelve, for He says, "Those which thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture may be fulfilled," yet the Lord afterwards shows that He embraces all who would believe on Him. Finally, in that chapter the Lord says, "The glory which

thou hast given me, I have given them.” —Here is the One into whose hands God can give glory, and who can impart glory to men, so that God Himself is glorified thereby.

In the passage in Luke 10, the Lord says, “All things have been delivered to me of my Father”—Who is He? It is Jesus, our precious Saviour. The angel of the Lord said to Joseph, “thou shalt call his name Jesus.” He is also Christ—the anointed One, whom God has set over all as Head. He is the Head of every man; the Head of the church; the Head over all things. He is the Lord, the One whom all shall own to be worthy, to whom every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the Son of man and rightful Heir to everything that man has ever been entrusted with. He is the Son of God, who as man, is in such a relationship to God; the object of His heart, as He says, “My beloved Son in whom I have found my delight.”

When the Lord says in Luke 10, that all things have been delivered to Him of His Father, He then says, “No one knows who the Son is, but the Father.” The One who can be entrusted with everything, is personally greater than the compass of the human heart or mind. No one knows who

the Son is. No one can comprehend His Person—who He is. We know Him as the Son, and we worship Him, but the Lord says, “No one knows *who* the Son is.” There is a greatness in Him that is incomprehensible, that is inscrutable. It is said in John 13, “Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God, and went to God.” It says, knowing it—He was conscious of all this, and then acts as a Model, He gives an example. It says, “he laid aside his garments.” Knowing that everything was in His hands, He laid aside His garments, and acted as a servant.

Whatever dignity He had, even from God as as having everything committed to Him, He would lay aside in order to serve them. He laid aside His garments and girded Himself with a towel and poured water into a basin and proceeded to wash the feet of His disciples. Peter, who had some sense of His greatness, said to Him, “Lord, dost thou wash my feet?” The Lord said, “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.” Afterwards the Lord said, “Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you,” John 13. 13-15.

The effort everywhere to-day, is to get garments, not to lay them aside, but to adorn oneself with anything that will make one look important and great in the eyes of one's fellows. You could not get a hearing in the religious world without distinguishing garments; men would not listen to you. That is not the Model. The example is that One who was great beyond all understanding, laid aside His garments, and says, "I am among you as he that serveth." The Lord wants us to be amongst His people in this way; laying aside all claims to greatness and recognition as being the oldest brother in the meeting, and so on—putting all that aside—laying aside the garments, following His example to serve His own. "I have given you an example," He says. There would be wonderful conditions existing even in this day of public ruin, if every brother and sister in each locality would follow this example, and humbly, quietly, devotedly seek to serve the interests of Christ, to wash one another's feet. The Lord goes on to speak of the bondman, saying, "The bondman is not greater than his lord." I do not mean that true spiritual greatness is not to be desired and retained, but that whatever one is, even spiritually, I am to lay it aside in the attitude of my mind, and to serve as one who is indeed "less than the least."

How the apostle Paul shone as a model; he had garments that indicated dignity according to God. He said to the Corinthians, "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?" 1 Cor. 9. 1. He could speak of knowing "a man in Christ," and of such an one he would glory,—“Of such an one will I glory,”—and “in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles though I be nothing,” 2 Cor. 12. 11. He said in that same epistle, “though I should boast somewhat more of our authority . . . I should not be ashamed,” chap. 10. 8. Yet knowing all this he said, “I Paul, myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ,” chap. 10. 1, so that instead of demanding recognition and glory from men, he said to the Corinthians “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved,” 2 Cor. 12. 15. He would in love gird himself to serve them. He did not preach himself, he did not move about as a great man, with cardinal’s robes or embroidered garments. His claim was “we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” He says, I have seen that Model, I have seen the One into whose hands the Father has given everything, and I have seen Him lay aside His

garments and take a towel and gird Himself and wash the disciples' feet. So of himself, he said to the Corinthians, "ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

I would commend the Model to each one of us; to follow it would bring the solution to many problems that arise. The working harmoniously of our relationships together will be maintained as we take character from this Model. Difficulties often arise because the place I think I ought to have is the place someone else has, but if I follow this wonderful example I would be among the saints as one that serves. The Lord Jesus is great indeed, greater than anything we could know of Him, nevertheless He says, "I am among you as he that serveth." As the Lord helps us, dear brethren, to take character from this Model, our relationships together will be like heaven on earth. We will enjoy the days of heaven upon earth. That is what God proposes for His people, but it can only be secured as we follow the blessed Model. The Lord help us to learn from Him. He says, "Learn from Me"—not of Me, but "from Me"—that is as Model,—“for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.”

One just desires to bring to our hearts the exceeding greatness of Christ. It says of Isaac, that he "waxed continually greater"

—I believe that describes what the Lord would ever be to us. Not that the Lord could be personally greater than He is, but in our appreciation of Him He waxes continually greater, so that we understand more and more what a wonderful thing it is that He should be amongst His own, as **One** that serves. He says, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

GOD AS OUR SUPPORT FOR CONTINUANCE

Acts 20. 17 to end

I DESIRE to say a few words to indicate how we may be helped to continue in the service of God. The apostle Paul before Agrippa says, that "having obtained help of God I continue to this day." He did not attribute his continuance in the service to himself or to his own faithfulness, but he says, "having obtained help of God I continue."

This scripture gives us the last words of the apostle to the Ephesian elders ere he parted with them. He had laboured amongst the saints there for three years, night and day, with tears, going from house to house, a living model of the truth. We need models to-day, if we are to continue in our localities in relation to what is of God. The letter of the truth, which cannot be gainsaid, will not alone enable us to continue; what is essential is that there should be models in each locality. The apostle Paul had been for three years presenting the truth in his life, in his ways, in his words and ministry. "I know," he says, "ye will see my face no more." The Lord had evidently given him an impression that his journey was coming to an end and he says, "I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God,

shall see my face no more." Well then, dear brethren, he is concerned that what is there should be continued, and he warns them, and seeks to encourage those who have the care of the saints, that they should be faithful and watch and remember. And then, after having done that, he says, "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace." That is what I wish to speak about—"I commend you to God"—for *God* continues.

Moses is the Paul of the Old Testament, he says, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations . . . from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." He indicates that if we are to continue it is because God is our dwelling place, because we have access to God. God speaks of Himself as "I Am" the "Eternal"—the One to whom time does not apply. Then God would encourage us in our time conditions; He speaks, not only as the I Am, but as the One "who is—(present)—who was (past)—and who is to come" (future). God speaks to us like that, so that we might understand that He is as available to us as in all generations. So the apostle says, "I commend you to God." I desire to re-echo that to-day, to commend each one to God as we separate after this meeting, perhaps for ever, as to our place on this earth. We necessarily must part here, but the apostle says, "I

commend you to God"—He abides—He continues.

Luke tells us that the people as they witnessed the activities of Christ here, "wondered at the glorious greatness of God." As the ministry of the word from the Lord gives us a fresh and deeper sense of the greatness of God, He would have our hearts filled with wonder at His glorious greatness. The apostle Paul knew God in such a way that he could say, "if we are beside ourselves, it is to God." One would like, dear brethren, to have a little touch of that kind of knowledge of God,—to be beside oneself to God. As the apostle thought of God in the spirit of worship, his soul was in an ecstasy, as considering the glorious greatness of God. One has often thought of the sun in the heavens as suggesting the light of the glory of God. We look up and see that marvellous light, greater than creature can compass or look at fully, our eyes are dazzled by it; but then God is pleased to break up the light in its various colours, so that we may gaze with wonder at it; we can marvel at the blendings of light.

Take the flowers—look at the absorption of light, the various colours, the blending of light in the flowers! All came from the sun. See it again in the feathers of the peacock—what wondrous beauty. See it in the fish

in the tropics—the light absorbed from the sun. God has given us all that to help us to consider the greatness of the sun. Thus He brings before us various rays of His glory and greatness. So in commending the Ephesians to God, the apostle would have in his soul all that God would be and is, towards man. God is pleased to break up the glorious greatness in different ways for us to contemplate and adore.

First I would speak of the *God of heaven*, Daniel 2. 44, for, dear brethren, if we are to continue, we shall need the God of heaven. What a wonderful sphere heaven is, and then there is a God of heaven. Heaven continues. There are changes on earth, especially as far as man and his world are concerned, but heaven does not change. The rule of heaven goes on; the sun still rises upon the evil and the good; the stars still go on their course as God ordained. God is the God of heaven, His throne is established there. The knowledge of the God of heaven comes in most beautifully in Daniel in the presence of the break up on earth, in the presence of the monarch who slew whom he would, and whom he would he kept alive; who overturned the kingdoms of the world.

Daniel was in the presence of a dreadful tyranny which cast men into a burning fiery furnace; in the presence of conspiracies which

put men into lions' dens if they did not give way. But Daniel speaks of the God of heaven, and Daniel lived in the light of that. What is said is "this Daniel continued." All the mighty power of Nebuchadnezzar, of Darius or the princes, could not get rid of this Daniel; no lions could devour him. It says "this Daniel continued until the reign of Cyrus"—until God came in. He stood in the light of the God of heaven, come what may on the earth. One delights to think of such men as Martin Luther who, standing before the Popish leaders and monarchs of the earth, said, "God is in heaven." You might say, help seems far away, but the apostle says, "I commend you to God," the God of heaven.

That is one ray of the glory, one marvellous ray of the glorious greatness of God. God is also the Rewarder—indeed He Himself is the Reward, Gen. 15. 1, and Heb. 11. 6. The One who is supreme on the line of rewarding. The Lord Jesus said prophetically, "I have spent my strength for nought and in vain"—all His labour apparently fruitless—"yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work (reward) with my God," Isa. 49. 4. He trusted in God to reward Him. He continued in the sense of who God was, and that He would recompense Him. He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, *wherefore* God has highly exalted

Him and given Him a name which is above every name." That is recompense! He has "highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." There is much more too, that the Lord is yet to have. Like Jacob who served for a wife, the Lord will have the assembly for His reward, part of the recompense that God will give Him.

Paul served like that, and continued to the end. He could say "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me in that day, and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing." The recompense comes—the God of recompenses will give him a reward for continuing in His service. It is also true that God will recompense what is evil. Jeremiah tells us that "the Lord God of recompenses shall surely requite," Jer. 51. 56. Paul writes to Timothy, "Alexander, the coppersmith, did me much evil, the Lord will reward him according to his works." God is the God of recompenses, and everything is going to be paid. What a recompense Christendom will have—that which professes the name of Christ. God will recompense Babylon double for all her sins—it will soon come upon the apostate system which dishonours the blessed Lord.

We should recognise this feature of the glorious greatness of our God, and that He

is the God who rewards, so that we should not be weary in well-doing, but be faithful, serving God who takes account faithfully and truly of every service done to His name. One would think of the dear sisters, many of them unknown, and often unappreciated, but let them commit themselves to God, the One who does not fail to take account of every bit of devoted service, for there is a reward with Him. On the other hand, speaking of those who may have turned away to the world, though they may not be aware of it they are still in the hand of the God of recompenses—God repays. There have been some very solemn warnings of late in connection with those who have turned away from the light into the world of darkness, but they are still in the hand of the God of recompenses.

God is also said to be the *God of measure*, 2 Cor. 10. 13. The apostle Paul speaks of Him in that way—the God of measure,—a wonderful ray of the glorious greatness of God! Things are not haphazard with God. We know little of how He measures, but He is the God of measure—He is supreme in measuring. It says “He meted out heavens with the span” meaning that it is all measured. “The stars in their courses” are spoken of,—a course is a planned out highway. Then, speaking of the earth, it says He “weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a

balance.” That is another form of measurement, putting this earth in a measure, putting a line to it as a builder does. God says to Job, “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth”—God speaks of its measures and its corner stone, Job 38. 5-6. And God measures what is spiritual also.

You will remember what is said to John in Revelation 11. “Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.” It is a solemn exercise to measure the temple to see if it corresponds with the pattern. In Ezekiel they are told to measure the pattern, so that they keep to the form and the ordinances, Ezek. 43. Then the altar is the place of sacrifice. God would measure the ability there is to sacrifice. What ability have we to sacrifice to Him? Rise, and measure it. Then again, measure them that worship, measure the worshippers. When the divine line is put on the worshippers, what have we got? The Holy City answers to all the measurements, and much is said there about measurements. The angel finds everything according to God, the length, breadth, and height are all according to God, everything measured according to God.

If we are to continue we must have to do with the God of measure. The apostle says that he had a measure—God had measured to him a measure. He says he did

not overreach himself, but that his measure reached to the Corinthians; in coming to them he did not go beyond his measure. Then he tells the Ephesians that "to everyone is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Christ measures out to everyone something to use for His name. He knows how much to give to each one, he measures it. Take the localities we come from, are we using our measure? Have we come into touch with the God of measure and are we concerned to fill up to the full, the measure of what God has entrusted to us, or do we sit back and leave things to others? The measure may be small, but the Lord knows what He has given us. He has given you something and He wants you to use that according to the measure.

I wish to ask each brother and sister, Are you using what the Lord has given you? You will not continue if you do not keep in touch with the God of measure. I would urge the older brothers to encourage the younger ones, to make room for them that they may use the measure they have, as Paul did for Timothy to whom he said "Fill up the full measure of thy ministry"—he desired that he might use it to the full. What we need is that those who are older, should recognise and encourage the younger ones, and that the younger should take up the exercise of using their measure.

“Unto every one that hath shall be given and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” If we do not use the measure, we are depriving God of the results of His own work. How encouraging if each uses his or her particular measure, and what increase for God would result!

Now another feature is the *God of patience*, Rom. 15. 5. One would almost hesitate to say that, if it were not in scripture. That the One who is Omnipotent, the One who is Almighty, should be called the God of patience! Think of God being patient, supreme in patience! There is nothing like the patience of God in the whole universe, nothing that compares with the patience of God—how wonderful it is! Think of the antediluvian world, “the long-suffering of God waited” over such a wicked world—He waited in patience. He endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath, He endured them patiently. Look back over our own histories, long or short, how wonderful the patience of God.

One marvels at the patience of God in bearing with a wayward people, as with Israel of old; grieved often, but He endured them with patience. The God of patience will help us to endure. The apostle Paul knew something about this; he wrote to the

Corinthians and said, "truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience," 2 Cor. 12. 12. John also, in the isle of Patmos could say, "your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." He was waiting patiently for God to come in. How we need that, if we are to continue,—“patient continuance in well doing.” The apostle says, “I commend you to God.” He is the God of heaven, the God who is the Rewarder, the God of recompenses, the God of measure, and the God of patience.

There are many other beams of glory which we cannot touch on now, innumerable blendings as well as direct beams, but I would refer finally, to God as the God of Jacob, Ps. 46. 7. He is our refuge if we are to continue. “The God of Jacob is our refuge, Selah!” What a God was the God of Jacob! The Psalmist says Selah—that is, pause, think about that—a note in the music! Think of Jacob, how like he is to us naturally, but I do not dwell on his natural features, we know them well in ourselves, features that are unworthy of God. The apostle says “I commend you to God,” it would include what is expressed in the God of Jacob, the One who took up Jacob and brought him through, until at the sunset of his life, he is a truly great man along with Abraham and Isaac,

for God says also, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob."

What a man Jacob is when a-dying! He "blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." God had followed Jacob for he says, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day, the Angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads!" We can say that, too, for how often have we nearly slipped; we can say "my steps were well-nigh gone." So he says "the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day, the Angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads," and in blessing them he puts the younger first.

God had taught Jacob, that the first man must be set aside, and that Christ in principle must take his place. God had given light as to it, earlier, that the elder must serve the younger, but light is not sufficient. Jacob now knows God in such a way that he gladly and "wittingly" puts the younger before the elder. It says it displeased Joseph, but Jacob says "I know it"; he crosses his hands wittingly for the younger was to be the greater. He puts Ephraim before Manasseh. The God of Jacob had brought Jacob to it, following him until he had learnt his lesson. Then it says, he worshipped. "By faith Jacob, when

he was a-dying, worshipped." Think of a dying man worshipping! Go back over Jacob's history, and think of the God who followed him, fed him, blessed him, until looking through the door of death, he worships God. One would like to die like that, to die worshipping God as known and loved.

As he approaches death he is not a self-sufficient man but dependent upon the God of Jacob. It would help us to continue if we knew the God of Jacob better.

The apostle says, "I commend you to *God*." How much more could be said about the glorious greatness of God. But the apostle says "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance amongst all them which are sanctified." The ministry of the Spirit is the word of His grace, and the Spirit is here to bring that word to our hearts. What helps us to continue, is to commit ourselves to God and to the word of His grace; what is ministered by the Spirit to our souls, will enable us to continue when those we love are gone. God remains, and the Spirit of God remains, and the word of His grace remains.

One would close with this dear brethren, that we would commend ourselves to God, and to the word of His grace.

THE COMING OF CHRIST INTO THIS WORLD

GOSPEL ADDRESS

Luke 19. 10; Matthew 20. 28

I WOULD like to say a word as to the coming of Christ into this world. I think one can say without fear of question, that His coming here is the greatest event of all time, and in view of the greatness of the One who came, the issues for men are profound.

First of all, I would like to tell you that I know and accept that He came. The apostle Paul says, "Christ Jesus came into the world." That cannot be said of anyone else. There is no other man of whom it could be said that he came into the world. Everyone else was brought here. Everyone else, dear friends, is here without responsibility resting on them as to their birth; indeed they had nothing whatever to do with it. Their responsibility begins as being here; but none of us have the slightest responsibility or part in our being brought here. But the One I want to speak about *came*—denoting without question that He *was* before He came; that He subsisted before He came; it was His own act to come—He came.

The apostle John tells us that the spirit of antichrist is abroad in the world to-day; it began even in apostolic days, but it has greatly increased,—and that it denies Jesus Christ come in flesh. Few deny that He was

here, but the spirit of antichrist denies "Jesus Christ come in flesh." That is, that He "was" before He came into manhood, which means that He was no mere man, but a divine Person. Now we might ask, "Where did He come from?" The Lord Himself answers that, He says Himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The truth about everything is in Him, and this is what He said, "I came down from heaven."

People think a lot of the earth, and live for it, but heaven is far, far greater than earth, dear friends. I may be speaking to earth-dwellers, people who live as if the earth were everything, but heaven is manifestly far greater than the earth. No one could live without heaven—not even physically. We might live without a great deal that we are accustomed to have belonging to the earth, but men would perish if it were not for heaven. Let us suppose that the sun did not shine, that its control of the earth should stop for a few seconds,—what would man do? Could he alter it? Suppose there were no more rain from heaven for a year or two,—where would we be? God says, "Heaven is my throne." That is where God is, and from whence He rules the earth. The Lord Jesus says, "I came down from heaven."

Now I could understand that if you had never heard the gospel you would say, Why

did He come? What brought One so supremely great to this earth? Why did He come? God Himself desired to draw near to men. God had spoken through the prophet Isaiah as to the coming of Jesus, and said "they shall call his name Immanuel," Isa. 7. 14. and Matthew tells us "which being interpreted is God with us," Matt. 1. 23. He was God, come right down to where we are. Every human heart should ask why? Why should God come so near to me? It cannot be to destroy, for if God wanted to destroy men He need not have come down to the earth to do it. His lightnings can destroy; His floods can destroy; He could open the windows of heaven you know, and people forget about that. Scripture speaks of the waters above the firmament; God has divided between the waters which are below the firmament and the waters which are above it. God could open the windows of heaven and destroy men if He wanted to do so. Then God could just shake the earth a little. That dreadful disaster in Japan, ten years ago, took just three minutes to destroy two of Japan's greatest cities! I only mention that to show that if God Himself has come down to His creatures, it clearly cannot be that He wishes to destroy them. It must denote a most profound interest and regard for His creatures. The truth is God has missed

man. When sin came in and separated man from God, God's voice was heard, saying, "Adam, where art thou?" Behind those words is an intensity of feeling—God felt the loss of man. So, dear friends, God has come down.

You will remember that the Lord Jesus was asked "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar," and He replied, "Show me a penny; whose image and superscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." He indicates that if Caesar's image is on the coin then Caesar has a right to it. We speak of the king's money to-day, and dear friends, the fact that it is the king's money denotes that if he wants it, he can claim it, he has a right to it. People would not like that, of course, but if a penny or a coin, or a note has his image on it, if there is a representation of the king on it, that denotes that he has a right to it. The Lord makes that clear. But then what about God's coins—what about that which bears His image? When He made man, God said, "Let us make man in our image." God put upon mankind His own image, so that every human being should be tribute to God. In the Law, God commanded, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind," but the tribute did not come. God had lost this. He had lost the love of His creature through the work of the devil. What did

God do? He came down to get it. That is what we are here for; that is the purpose of the gospel. You may say, I thought it was to save me from hell? It would indeed do that, but that is not its object. God wants man's heart; He wants man to love Him. So the Lord says, "I came down from heaven."

The passages we read, tell us some of the reasons why He came. In the first passage it says, "To seek and to save that which was lost." To seek it. Oh, how wonderful that the Lord should seek us? We are enjoined to seek Him: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found,"—and He may be found—"Call ye upon him while he is near,"—and He is near. He is "not far from any of us," and God is looking into our hearts to see if there is a desire after Him. God takes account of those that feel after Him. We are enjoined to seek Him. How right indeed that He should be sought. People are seeking all kinds of things to-day. One man devotes his whole life and heart and mind to flying; another man to wireless; and another man to making money in business. But God says "Seek ye me, and ye shall live," Amos 5. 4. Then God says, Seek Him who "maketh the day dark with night." Man cannot do that—nobody can bring the night.

What a wonderful thing the night is; as the day closes and the dusk sets in and

the darkness comes down and all can rest. Who made it? Oh, say some, it is just an accident; it just happens. Seek Him who "turneth the shadow of death into the morning." The dark night gradually fades away then comes the wonder of the morning. Seek Him who makes that. Seek Him who "calleteth for the waters of the sea and poureth them out upon the face of the earth." Who makes rain? Oh, say some, still just an accident; it just happens; some atoms exploded and somehow it just happened. That is what men are saying. God says, Seek Him who calls for these waters, and takes them up and sends them back again. You can understand, dear friend, that we should seek Him with all our hearts—"seek and ye shall find"—but that He should seek us is indeed wonderful. That is what the Lord says "The son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

In yonder city of Samaria, there was a poor woman; she has had five husbands, and he whom she now had was not her husband. Her heart is empty and thirsty. She has learned that the pleasures of sin do not satisfy. She is longing for something, she does not know what. She says, "Give me this water that I thirst not"—that is the cry of her heart. Jesus must seek that poor woman, it says "He must needs go through Samaria." Oh, dear friend, take it into your heart. He

came to seek and to save the lost, and He tells that woman about being a worshipper of God. He tells her that He wants her to be so happy in the knowledge of God, that she should be a worshipper of God. In the joy that He brings her in the knowledge of God there springs up out of her own being an answer to God. In John 7, it is flowing out to man, but in chapter 4, the response is out of the woman's heart—such a heart as it had been—and as she learns to know God, there is a movement upward and God gets a response to His coming down in Jesus, the One who came to seek and to save the lost. If, dear friend, your heart is thirsty, say to Him as did this woman, "Give me this water that I thirst not."

The word of God says, "The eye is not satisfied with seeing"; you may go round the earth looking for something to see, but you will not find that which will satisfy you. Then it says, "The ear is not satisfied with hearing." You may listen to everything that the world could pour into your ear, but it will not satisfy. But the Lord says to this woman, "He that drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst for ever." Will you not come to Him? I believe He is seeking you now; although personally He is in heaven, He can operate throughout the whole world. He has gone up "far above

all heavens," that He may fill all things—why not let Him fill your heart to-day—He is seeking *you!*

The Lord said on another occasion as He pursued His journey seeking what was lost, "Let us go over unto the other side of the lake."—this wonderful Person that came to seek and to save.—No, said the devil, if I can prevent that, He shall never get there! A great storm comes up and the wind blows, and the waves rise and come into the ship, but the Lord had said, "Let us go over unto the other side," and nothing could turn Him back. Why does He want to go to the other side? He is going to seek somebody, there is somebody there He wants, and He is going to find him and to save him. Who is he? Oh, an awful man! It says of him that he had devils a long time; for years and years the devils had controlled that man. It says, he "ware no clothes,"—his life is utterly shameless. That is what is fast coming on the present world—and the devil is doing it. The demons are coming back and they are producing the abandonment of the present moment. It says he lived in the tombs. You say, What a place to live! It is living in unspeakable corruption. He lived in it, just like men and women and children to-day, alas. What about the vile books that are pouring out from the printing press? Tombs—

filthy tombs many of them, and people are living in them. Many of the things people find their pleasure in to-day are sepulchres morally; and this man was like that; he lived in them. And it says "he was exceeding fierce." The ferocity of the present day is coming from the devil.

Well there was this man—and the Lord says, "Let us go over unto the other side." What did He want? He wanted to find this man. He went there to seek and to save him. That is God! God is not like us. We read, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways, than your ways." So the Lord finds that man and saves him; there he is sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. Everybody in their right mind sits at the feet of Jesus. The power of these awful things is broken by coming into touch with Christ. You never want to go to another tomb; you will always dress decently; all the ferocity that sin brings about is gone, and the demons have fled when you really meet Jesus. The man is "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind: and they were afraid." I wonder why! They ought to have been afraid of a demon-possessed man; but it does not say they were afraid of him. The marvel is they would prefer to see a man in utter wickedness, to one sitting at the feet of Jesus, converted.

To be converted so that you love the Lord and you only want to please Him, is more dreadful in the eyes of the world than to go into evil and live in tombs and wear no clothes. It says that they were afraid, and begged the Lord to depart. Are you going to do that? The Lord went on with His journey; He had come to seek and He will go wherever man is.

I would remind you of another man: he had behind him a history of wickedness, he had before him death and after death, judgment. He is right at the door of eternity, just about to go through, and this wonderful Seeker is travelling the road where He will find him. I refer to the dying thief. There comes this blessed Saviour, come from heaven to seek and to save that which was lost, and He finds this man in that state—dying. Dear friend, that might be you, might it not? You say I am not a robber. But you are a sinner, and as such you have robbed God.

This robber with the guilt of his sins upon him, is about to die, far away from God; but the great and blessed Seeker has sought him and found him and saved him, so that he is relieved of the burden of his guilt. He speaks of it—what a burden it was: “We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds,” he says to his fellow. I have seen a number of persons die, and have noticed

that God gives many a vision of their past; it seems as if God brings up in a flash before a man's soul, his own history. He did with this man, he says, "Our deeds." Oh, what a list! What will he do with them? What will you do with your sins when you have to meet God? This man realised that he had to meet God; he says, "Dost not thou fear God?"—he says you have to meet God, there is no escape from it. God says that every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue confess to God. "As I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God," Rom. 14. 11. This man is about to meet God, but he finds the blessed Seeker at his side, "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." I do not dwell now upon the Lord's work for him at this time, but I would like to leave this with you, that the Lord Jesus came from heaven into manhood; He became the Son of man, standing in wonderful relationship to men, in order to find men for God; to seek them where they were, wherever they may be, even at the door of death, and save them and bring them to God.

Matthew 20. 28, tell us another feature of the Lord's coming. It says, "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Great people in this world must be ministered to. But the Son of man did

not come to be ministered to; He came to minister. The apostle Paul says "ourselves your servants." And the blessed Lord came to serve—"I am among you as one that serves," He said to His disciples. It says He "took a bondman's form" —The best translation gives it thus—a bondman is a slave, and He took the form of a bondman; He came to serve. These three instances disclose how He served, and whom He served. He was prepared to serve all, "whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." That is Christ. Nobody can take His place there. There are not many people prepared to serve lepers, demoniacs, outcast women, dying robbers, blind beggars. The One who will serve them is Jesus. Others are not great enough to do it as He did. The Lord says, "He that is greatest among you let him be . . . as he that doth serve."

Then it says, "and to give his life a ransom for many." What do you think is the value of the blood of Christ? Judas valued it at thirty pieces of silver; when he came in and threw them down they said "it is the price of blood." That blood was the blood of Christ. But dear friends, that is not heaven's estimate, but hell's. The Spirit of God speaking to believers says, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold . . .

but with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Peter 1. 18-19. All the silver and gold on the face of the earth could not effect redemption, nor pay the price of the ransom. "None . . . can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him: for the redemption of their soul is precious." The life of Jesus was precious. The blood means the life, it is by the giving up of the life of Jesus—that life which was of such infinite value in the sight of God—that the ransom has been paid. What silver and gold could never do; and what mere human righteousness could never effect, for "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," that sacrifice at Calvary has effected. The giving up of the life of Jesus as a ransom, has established God's righteousness in blessing the guiltiest sinner.

Paul says, "He gave himself a ransom for all,"—such is the value of the death of Jesus in the sight of God! How beautifully Peter speaks of it, he says, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." May we have a right sense of its value. The Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven and became Man to give Himself a ransom for all, so that every soul that turns to God in repentance, is accepted in the value of the Person and work of Christ. God commands

men to repent; God will not accept less than that from you. And so the dying thief says "We indeed justly," he says in effect, I have been all wrong; my life has been all wasted and spoilt; it is right that I should die and be judged. "We indeed justly." Though he may not have understood it, nevertheless it was true, that the value of the ransom was available to him, and the Lord says, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Will you not come to Him? There is no other ransom, there is no other way of meeting your need as a sinner, save by the sacrifice of Christ, "who gave himself a ransom for all."

"God commands all men everywhere to repent,"—that is your side; that you judge yourself and your guilty past; and if a soul says "I have sinned and perverted that which is right, and it profited me nothing," then God says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." But God insists that there should be repentance, and repentance means that you turn to God in self-judgment. You own your sin and your worthless past. The repentant sinner says, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and the Lord says of such an one, "he went down to his house justified."