

The Servant of the Lord

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Chapter 1 – Behold My Servant

The words around which our thoughts are going to be gathered today are at the beginning of the forty-second chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah:

"Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; My chosen, in whom my soul delights ..." and for the moment, the first clause: *"Behold my servant"*. We are going to be occupied with 'the servant of the Lord': that is, with the nature, the method and the means of the service of God.

What is true service to God? How, and by what means God is most truly served? I am sure we are all concerned with a matter of this kind, that our being here on this earth, our passing this way, only once — and when it comes near to the end, it seems to have been so short, so swift — but that it shall have meant that in some vital way, the Lord shall have been served by our being here. That surely goes to the heart of every one of us, and therefore we will respond to any help that may be given in the understanding of how that may be. And that is the thing that the Lord has laid on my heart for this time. For those who have but a superficial knowledge of the Bible, it only needs to be mentioned for it to spring into life and recognition, that the idea of service, the law of service, is a dominant one throughout all the Scriptures. When we open our Bible and begin, we find that man was not only made, himself, as something to satisfy a divine idea, and not only was he given a great wealth of things to enjoy and by which to profit, but he was given a trust. He was put in trust by God; he was called immediately into a vocation. And from there, right on through the Bible, that law of vocation, that principle of service, is a golden thread running through the whole fabric, till we reach the end of the Bible, and among the last words are these: *"And his servants shall serve Him, and they shall see his face"*.

Abraham's election and call was, above everything else, vocational. The same was manifestly true of Moses, who goes down in history with the title: *"Moses My servant"* - the servant of the Lord. Israel's very constitution and redemption was on the basis of: *"Let my people go that they may serve Me."* The Lord's service governed their very beginning, and remained the law of their life; it determined everything where they were concerned. It is very clear that this was true of David, and of all the intermediary servants of the Lord: the priests, the kings, the prophets and the nation. They all represented this divine idea of a purpose to be served, a vocation to be fulfilled, a work to be done for God. And when we pass into the New Testament, this truth is so self-evident that we should be perhaps wasting time to stay to point it out. There is a great phrase with which we are very familiar, used by the apostle Paul: *"called according to His purpose"* - and that is a very comprehensive phrase. But we must interpret it aright. *"Called according to His purpose"* does not just mean 'called to be something', although it does mean that or, 'called to have something', although it also means that. It means supremely 'called to a great vocation'. *"Called according to His purpose"* relates to a work to be done; something in which God Himself is to be served. The idea of service, and servanthood, runs through these prophecies of Isaiah from which we have extracted this fragment. And in a certain section of this book, this idea comes out as being the very core, and the very sum of everything else in the book. You will think about it, and go back to it with this thought in mind, you will find that all that there is in this book circles around this vocation of the servant of the Lord. Much of the tragedy which is recorded here, is simply the tragedy of the Lord's people in their failure in this very matter of *vocation*. All the hope and the prospect that is presented, is closely bound up with the recovery of this vocation. There is a great deal here; I would like to spend time with this book, taking you right through with this word 'servant'. I shall not do that, although I have underlined the word, and am myself tremendously impressed (and you would be also) with the large number of times that the word 'servant' occurs in these prophecies.

If you have not noticed it, I suggest that you do what I have done, that you lift the book of Isaiah right out, and then read it in the light of this one word, 'servant'. And you will come to the same conclusion that I have come to, that the core, the sum of everything here, is servanthood, or, the service of the Lord.

Now, when we do consider the book in the light of this dominant factor, we find that it resolves itself into three aspects. First of all, the fact that this 'servant' vocation was fundamental to the choice of the whole nation, that is, the people of God as a people. Let me repeat that: it is made perfectly clear that this conception of servanthood was fundamental to their election, to their choice and separation, their calling and their constitution. In a very real sense, this book reveals that their existence was hanging upon this one thing — a divine vocation — their service to God; and, should they fail there, there is no longer any justification for them being that nation. But then, that is exactly what did happen. There is the fundamental calling, or, law of their calling — service, or servanthood. But, as a whole, as a nation, in entirety, they failed in this very thing. And because of that, they are put aside. And this book sees the nation, at least for the time being, set on one side, put out of its place, and totally inoperative in relation to God.

Well, you will be recalling some of these passages which I have not stayed to quote, which relate this very phrase 'My servant', to Israel. "*Thus saith the Lord to Israel, Thou art My servant ... to Jacob, Thou art My servant ...*". That is a collective term. That was the first thing, that the idea of the people of God, as a corporate whole, is that of servanthood. Let us hold that, because we have got to come back and say much more about that.

The second thing is that because of the failure of the nation as a whole, we find a transition from the nation to a single Person - Person spelt with a capital 'P'. Whereas, in the first place, the nation was termed "*My servant*", that was taken away from the nation, and transferred to this individual, this Person. And so we could take up a second series of passages from the book, which bring that Person into view: "*... My servant, My chosen, in whom My soul delights*". That is a contrasting picture with that which has ceased to satisfy the soul of God. There begins, then, this presentation and unveiling of this Servant of the Lord as related to the Messiah, the Christ. All these Messianic prophecies about the Lord Jesus as the Servant of the Lord. In that Person, all the original full, perfect thoughts of God as to servanthood, the essential meaning of it was taken up, exemplified, and fulfilled in this Individual, in this One, "*My Servant*".

The third point is the reappearance and perpetuation in the idea of a remnant. Lost in the whole nation, saved in the Individual, deposited in a remnant. A remnant constituted on the basis of the Individual, taking its character from *The Servant of the Lord*, as that one Person. The word 'remnant' occurs some dozen times in this book, but we know so well that it runs through most of the prophets; it is a governing idea in the prophets: "*a remnant shall return*"; "*the Lord will preserve unto Himself a remnant*"; and that 'remnant' becomes the repository of this divine law of servanthood. One of the last things said about the 'remnant' in the Old Testament is: "*My peculiar treasure*". And not because of what they were in themselves, but because of the purpose which they served in recovering the divine thought of 'servanthood'.

So we have here these three things: the nation, its calling on the principle of servanthood, and its tragic failure. The Person introduced — and what an introduction in chapter 9 of the Servant! Everybody is familiar with the words descriptive of Him there — "*Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace*" — He is introduced in full terms. Verse 6: "*Unto us a son is born; unto us a child is given ...*" and so on. Here He is described in the following verses of that presentation, as to His spiritual nature and character; we may not stay with all those details at the moment. Here He is introduced, appointed, tested through suffering. For remember, at the heart of Isaiah 53

is: *"My righteous servant ..."* — *"My righteous servant shall justify many"* — tested through suffering, and triumphant: *"My servant shall be very great ... very high."* And then the remnant — purged also through suffering, and finally attested: *"My peculiar treasure"*. Let us step back a moment. This book has a very great deal in it about the judgment of that nation; its judgment fills many pages; and while worldliness was the cause of the judgment, it was the vocation that was the crux of the whole matter. We must ever remember that the vocation of the people of God roots entirely upon their separateness from this world. Therefore, to destroy or to paralyse their mighty, God-given vocation, the great enemy will always seek to create a link between them and this world. That was the burden of the prophets: the link which had come about between this nation and the other nations and this world, resulting in their being found totally incapable of their fulfilling their vocation in the world, and among the nations. The judgment was not only because of condition, but because of failure in the very object of their existence. If something ceases to fulfil the purpose for which it was created, it may still be that object, that entity, but with God, it no longer stands where it did stand in His acceptance, when the purpose of its creation is lost. There is a principle wrapped up in that. We all ought to recognise what matters to God, is not just that we are Christians, called God's people. It is that we are fulfilling the purpose of our existence as such, the *vocational purpose*, and 'walking worthily of the calling wherewith we are called'.

As to the Person, it is quite clear from what I have said, and from the reading of this book, that He is central to everything. It is impressive that so early in the book, at the point marked by our division of chapters, in chapter 9 He is introduced as though He is placed there to dominate all that follows. A great deal is going to follow, but it will all be under the shadow of this One, whom God has Himself appointed.

As to the 'remnant', all we at this moment would say is that the remnant represents the abiding principle of God's purpose and God's method. We are familiar with this fact, that when the main thing fails God, His reaction is not to abandon His purpose, but to take it up in a representative company, in the Old Testament called the 'remnant'. That is God's principle and God's method of continuity. He has followed that all through history.

Now, when we pass to the New Testament, for it is possible that you have been thinking: That is all Old Testament; that is all Israel; what has that to do with us? Well, listen. When we pass to the New Testament, what we find, in the first place, is that that Nation, as such, is displaced. There is no doubt about it. When you open your Gospels, there is no doubt about it, that nation is no longer in the place of divine favour; it is no longer standing in the place of divine vocation. It is under judgment, which judgment is coming near to fulfilment. It is displaced. And secondly, we find this Person, not now in prophecy, but actually present in all the terms of the prophecies. Here He is; He is present. And all that the prophet and the prophets said about Him is now actually on the spot. He is here, with all the features that have been foreshadowed about Him. But thirdly, a new nation is being brought in. To use Peter's description, and mark you, Peter was not speaking of the Israel after the flesh: he is speaking concerning the church. *"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who brought you out of darkness into His marvellous light."* That is a summary of calling and the purpose of calling, and the nature of the call. A new nation is being brought in. In the fulfilment of one judgment phrase of the Lord Jesus to the old nation, *"The kingdom of heaven shall be taken away from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof."* And so, with the New Testament, the new nation is introduced, and on the way to being made up, and added to. But, the shadow comes in too soon. The fourth thing that we find before we are through our New Testament is, decline and apostasy; worldliness again, that devastating thing, creeping into the church. And judgment of the church now being foretold and begun. As a whole, this new nation is beginning to fail in the purpose for which it was raised up. And this, in general, is nigh unto — to use the very unpleasant phrase, but it is Scripture — 'being spued out of God's mouth'. It is a terrible thought concerning a 'holy nation', but there it

is. But that is not the end of the Old (New) Testament. There is God's acting again, and His old law and principle being followed out. It is the remnant — "*he that overcomes*".

I was impressed with reading through Isaiah again, and coming to the later chapters, where the servant idea is in the plural, if I remember rightly, some eleven times in the later chapters, after chapter 54, that here it is in the singular - that is 'servants', 'servants'. Right up to that point it has been collective, but now it is individuals — 'servants', 'servants', 'My servants'. Now, let us be careful, that does not mean that the divine idea of collective servanthood has been abandoned, as we shall see in a minute, but it corresponds to what we have in those early chapters of the Book of the Revelation: "*He that has an ear to hear ...*". You see, it is personal. And, as in those last chapters of Isaiah, so in those first chapters of the Revelation, the corporate is made up of individuals who have got the idea. Now, it is not something just general, vague and indefinite. Now it is people, individuals if you like, who have *seen* what God intended, who have grasped the divine meaning in the existence of the church, and who have made a personal response to stand for that; and they have become the new representation of the divine intention. They are corporate by reason of their one vision, their one apprehension. It is like that today, is it not. In general there is a very uncertain and indefinite apprehension of God's eternal purpose; multitudes of Christians are very vague about the immense thing which lies behind their calling of God; what it is they are called unto. Let me put it like this: How many Christians, perhaps, how many in this very company, could give an answer to a question on those various fragments of Paul's prayer for the church: "*That you may know what is the hope of His calling*".

Can you write down what that is, '*the hope of his calling*'? Could you answer an examination on "*what the riches of his inheritance in the saints*"? Not your inheritance in Him, but His in you, in the church. And what could you say about, "*what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe*"? What do you know about it? It is not a judgment, but a statement of fact that multitudes of Christians do not know, haven't any idea of the meaning of their salvation, in terms of God's great eternal purpose; what it means to Him to have a church through the ages of the ages. But there are, here and there, those who 'have an ear to hear what the Spirit says', scattered individuals who have glimpsed it, who have grasped it, who sensed it; the eyes of whose hearts have been enlightened by a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and have some, even if only a small measure, of apprehension of what God is after. That is how it turns out at the end of the prophecies of Isaiah; that is how it is in the day of general declension in the New Testament: the remnant company of those who have an ear to hear what the Spirit says.

So we have here, again to summarise, the church, the elect vessel of the timeless purpose of God. We have here the Servant, The Servant, exalted through faithfulness and suffering, constituted the example, the pattern of all service to God for the church. And the remnant that takes its character and its purpose most truly and most fully from that Person. You see where that leads us — the necessity for *seeing* the Servant, for *knowing* the principles of His Servanthood, understanding the nature of the service of God in the light of The Servant in whom God's soul delighted.

But that lies ahead. I am going to finish by drawing your attention to an arresting and very important feature of this whole presentation. And I ask you therefore to seek grace to grasp this arresting and so important feature of the whole matter.

Now then the nation and the church (the nation in the Old Testament, Israel, and the church in the New) is always visualized as a single entity, a corporate person. It may be comprised of many tens or hundreds of thousands, but it is one servant — My servant. In the thought and mind of God, it is a single entity. If, at any time, or anywhere, the plural is used, 'servants', all are looked upon as parts of this one entity. And the thing which constitutes this singleness of identity, is the *vocation*. If any part falls out of the vocation,

it falls out of its life with God; it is relegated to a position where it is out of the eye of God for all good. So one is this 'servant' of the Lord — it may be a nation; it may be a remnant. It is always spoken of in this way of being a single entity.

Now, in the Bible, and this is a very interesting and impressive thing, the nation is sometimes narrowed down to, perhaps, a single person, and, for that time, in the mind of God, that person is the nation. That individual is the nation, in representation. And God deals with that individual on the basis of the nation. God's dealings with that individual are just as though He were dealing with the whole nation, I say, that is a tremendously impressive thing; an arresting thing. Sometimes the High Priest is looked upon as the nation. You remember the High Priest 'clothed with filthy garments'; he stands there before God as the nation; it is the nation in its uncleanness that is represented. And when God says: "*Take away the filthy garments, and put a fair mitre upon his head*", He is speaking collectively concerning the nation, because at that time, the nation was in weakness and defeat because of its defilement, and Satan, the Adversary, stood at the right hand of the priest to resist him. And the power of the Evil One could not be undone until the filthiness of the nation was removed, as in the person of the high priest. And then, when the filthy garments were taken away, and the fair mitre was put upon his head, the word was: "*The Lord rebuke thee, Satan, even the Lord.*" You see, the individual as the nation. Sometimes it is the king; so bound up with the nation, and the nation so bound up with the king, that God deals with the king as a kind of national entity. That was true of David when he numbered Israel. Sometimes it is the prophet. How some of these prophets had to be put through 'national' experiences, in order to fulfil their servanthood. They were 'national' individuals. Or, to take this principle from another standpoint: what about Achan? Achan is one man in a nation; Achan sins, and the whole nation is arrested in its onward march of victory, and brought into defeat. And, when the search is made, the Lord answers: 'Israel has sinned' — not, *Achan* has sinned — '*Israel* hath sinned'. This thought is in God's mind, that there is this corporate entity; every part is so much a part of the rest, in God's mind. Now that is true in Israel, as can be so clearly seen, and that is what is so fully taught in the New Testament. "*The body is one ... yet having many members ...*" — it is one! And it is one by reason of its function, its vocation — what it is called to do.

This not only applies in the Bible to individuals but this principle is seen to apply to the few; it applies to the remnant. In that day of the remnant, God looks upon the remnant as the nation. That is, for the moment, to God, the nation. That is, for Him, for the time being, the whole. It embodies everything in God's thought. What I am trying to get at is this: this matter of vocation or servanthood, is corporate; it is not just individual. I wonder, with all our teaching of the nature of the church, the Body of Christ, if we have yet grasped the reality of this. It is essential to servanthood; essential to vocation; essential to the kind of service that God requires: it is not just individual; it is corporate. Representation and responsibility are much bigger than the individuals. God does not deal with you and with me just as individual Christians. God deals with us because of our relatedness to all the others, in the great vocation of the church. If you and I, as individuals, default, and fail, we affect the vocation of the church in some mysterious way; we weaken the whole. The strength, life and effectiveness, of any company of believers, is affected by the individuals that make it up. Make no mistake about it: you cannot live in sin; you cannot fail the Lord in any way, and it remain with you, and you go on like that, as just one, and say: Well, I am only one, it does not matter so much! It cannot be. This law is written through the whole of the divine revelation: that what is true of the individual affects the whole in the realm of the Holy Spirit. A company may be held from blessing, from effectiveness, from fulfilling the vocation, or from God's approval, because somewhere there are individuals who are out of touch with Him, who are wrong, who are in sin. Now, if you have any doubt about that, you go to your New Testament again, and see how true that is. Responsibility is in representation. That is, an individual may represent the whole, as Achan; a small company in any one place may represent the whole church, with God. It is a tremendous thing, is it not, that that may

be true. Oh, that in our local companies, things were more as God would have them! What an influence and effect it would have on the whole church. God must have it; He must have His thought in fulness represented, in order that it might be like the plummet, the plumb-line for His whole church. This is something to take account of. And remember, God deals with us in this way. His dealings with us individually are not just His dealings with us as individuals. Have you grasped this? He is dealing with us church-wise; 'holy nation' -wise. We have often said that that man, the apostle Paul, who was particularly and peculiarly raised up of God to bring in the full revelation of the church for this dispensation, himself went through all the experiences of the church. *"I fill up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake, which is the church."* There is a man suffering — and what sufferings! They look like the sufferings of any ordinary person in some ways: shipwreck, hunger, nakedness, cold, treachery, perils and so on. Yes, but he says: *"They are sufferings of Christ for his body's sake, which is the church."* In those sufferings, the history of the church is implicit. Today, you and I, in this place, are benefiting from those sufferings of the apostle Paul and the whole church has been affected by them. The history of the church has passed into his constitution, into his very experience. He became the dispensational embodiment of the truths that he was called upon to enunciate. And that is not isolated to the apostle Paul. If any company is going to be an example to the church, of God's full thought, that company is going to be dealt with most thoroughly; it will get away with nothing that is contrary to God's mind. Its experience will be one of travail, suffering, discipline and purging. The history of the whole will come into its experience; God's thought for the whole will be there in operation. It explains a lot. Many an individual suffers, not because they are so important in themselves; not because of their weakness or failure; but because of their relatedness to the whole purpose of God. Now, that is something that is arresting, and has to be taken hold of. You can see it in the case of Christ, of course.

Christ was baptized into the national history of Israel. He took up in His own single Person all that Israel was called to, and failed in, and the judgment following. His was the history of Israel, summed up in a single Person. He went to the cross as Israel. That is what many exponents found themselves incapable of understanding in Isaiah who is the prophet speaking about? Some Prophet? Some Servant? Some unidentified person, some nation? What is he talking about? It is all so mixed up! The individual is the nation; the individual's sufferings, as in Isaiah 53: *"for My people ... for the iniquity of My people ... for the transgression of My people was He afflicted"*. He has taken the nation into His experience, and the cross is Israel under judgment in a Person. It is so very clear in the case of Christ, and He, Personally, is not one alone; He is corporate. The world, not only Israel, was in Him on the cross. The whole creation was there in Him at Calvary. He took up the purpose of the creation; He took up the failure of the creation; He took up the sin of the whole world. He took up the judgment of it all, and as the whole creation, He suffered, He died, that there should be, by His resurrection, a new creation. It is creational; it is cosmic, that cross; it is not just the cross of an individual — it is corporate, collective. The church cannot unrelate itself to the world in this way. While it has got to be separate from the world-principle, and the world-spirit, and that is perfectly patent in the Word, yet, in the matter of vocation, you and I, and the church, cannot unrelate ourselves to the world. We are to be the world. Before God, the travail for this world has got to be in our souls; the salvation of this world has got to be a matter of anguish with us. The world has got to be in our hearts. If God so loved the world, that same love has got to be in our hearts. We cannot just be a church apart, or churches apart, or individuals apart. This is a world thing. We represent, and should exemplify God's will and God's thought for the world. It is collective. Perhaps we have to be baptized into the sufferings and the sorrows of men to fulfil our vocation. If the church, in the wrong sense, becomes worldly, that does not break the principle; it is judged with the world. The judgment on the world falls upon the church, if it becomes worldly in the wrong sense. But, our relatedness is such, so vital, that God would look upon us, as we are on our knees, as He would look upon the world, and He would say: There is the world and its need, its need being suffered for, travailed for! The Lord give us larger vision.

I do want to underline this great law of the corporate nature of vocation. There is far more bound up with this than we have recognised. "*No man lives unto himself ... no man dies unto himself ...*". You cannot just be a separate individual if you are a member of this holy nation, this body of Christ!

Chapter 2 – The Model, Representative Servant

“Behold My servant, whom I uphold; My chosen, in whom My soul delights” (Isa. 53:1).

I want to link with that some of the most familiar words from the lips of that Servant, recorded by Matthew in his Gospel, chapter 11, verse 28:

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

“Behold My servant”! And as we proceed a little further in this matter of servanthood and service, we are going to take a look at this model, pattern, representative Servant, and learn, I trust, something of servanthood and service, from Him.

The words which we have read from the Gospel have been mainly used for preaching to the unsaved. I don't think I have ever heard a message on those words otherwise, than to the unsaved. They are almost universally and exclusively used as a 'Gospel appeal', as it is called. And I am not questioning the right of that, but I want to point out that those words were addressed to those people who called themselves 'The people of God'. They were addressed to Israel; they were spoken to the Jews. And their subject is not salvation; their subject is service. It is to labourers, burdened, weighed down, in their toil, their labour, that the appeal was made, and the very symbols used are the symbols of service. 'My yoke' - the 'yoke' was the symbol of service, of work. And the real message there is this: these people were striving to work; they were toiling, labouring, as they intended, for God. It was in relation to God that they were thus burdened. We know what the burden was; it was the burden of the Law. To the leaders of the nation Jesus said, 'You bind heavy burdens, and lay them upon men's shoulders; they are grievous to be born'. And under that overwhelming weight of legal service, they were bowed down, and found no rest. And Jesus, in this appeal, was only saying in other words: 'I can teach you how to work to satisfaction, to joy, because all this that you are in, that you are doing, that you are striving after, does not get you anywhere. I can teach you how to work, and get somewhere. This is achieving nothing.' And there is nothing more heart-breaking than to labour and toil, and never accomplish anything, never get anywhere, see nothing for it, and there be nothing for it. There is nothing more gratifying, heart-ravishing, than to be in work, to do work, and see that it is worthwhile and getting somewhere. The toil, the labour, that gets there — that is rest, is it not? Real rest is not sitting down doing nothing; real rest is seeing that all that you do is worthwhile. It is reaching an end.

And that is exactly what Jesus was saying to these people: 'Come to Me; learn of Me; and I will teach you the way of service that is worth-while, and that gets somewhere. Learn of Me.'

All true service for God takes its nature from Christ. Now, what I am saying to you at this time, sounds simple, but it is drastically testing and discriminating. Let me say at once: there is a vast amount of what is called 'The Work of the Lord' or 'service' for the Lord, which is not 'getting there'; which is not going through to God's end, and achieving His purpose, and will be exposed at the end as having missed the way. A great deal is on a purely and merely 'personality' basis. Well, much could be said like that, and there is a great deal going up in smoke. So don't be deceived, and don't make any mistake; I am not talking about working 'for the Lord'; what is commonly and generally called 'The Lord's work', 'the Lord's service'. I am occupied and concerned with what is true service to God, the real nature of what is service to God. Does that need more careful defining? You can have a little child, who wants to help Mother — and oh, how busy! What a lot of

things she is doing! Always such a good intention, and seems to be so happy about it all — helping Mother! But poor Mother! Really she is making more work than she is doing; making more difficulty than she is clearing up. Presently, when she is gone to bed, Mother will have to put all that work straight, clear up all that well-intentioned labour! It is meant to be 'service' but Mother's verdict is: 'Yes it is meant *for* me, but it is not really service *to* me.' There is a difference. And the Lord may take that attitude. 'I recognize that it is all meant for Me; and I recognized how well intentioned it is; it is with a good motive. But it is really not service to me!' Not reaching the end that I have at heart! We have got to make that discrimination. For these people were doing countless things, which they thought were for God. You have only got to look into their rules and regulations, and all that they were doing in their rites and ceremonies, and what not — for God. And it was all abortive; it was getting nowhere. It became a tremendous burden and toil for God. But to such Jesus said: 'Learn of Me and I will teach you the way of service that is service to God indeed.'

And if we are going to learn, we have to look at Him; not only listen to what He says, but look at Him. For I repeat, all true service to God takes its nature from Christ, and is all a matter of the knowledge and the understanding of the Lord Jesus. Yes, *the knowledge and the understanding of Christ is the essential basis of service*. Have you got the force of that? Upon what is the service of Christ built in Christianity? What do people mean when they say they are going into the 'Lord's work'? In order to go into the Lord's work, into the Lord's service, we must go to some institution, some college, some place where we shall take lectures and study, and read up, and then will be qualified to 'go into' the Lord's work. Is that true? Now, without for one moment undervaluing such teaching, instruction and training — it has its place — I want to say this emphatically - you may have all that you can get in that way, and still lack the essential for *serving* the Lord. All that is no guarantee that you have got the essential to serve the Lord. "*Take My yoke ... and learn of Me.*"

Christ is a spiritual university! Pardon me if I treat you as little children, reminding you of the very word itself: 'uni - versity'. We are in a universe. People go to a uni-versity — what is that? Well, 'versum' is just 'a line', is it not? A *line*. The *verse* is so many lines. A university is a place where there are so many, or all, the lines. All the lines, that is, every subject that you want to know about. There is *this* line. You will read history; you read law; you read this, and that. And all the lines meet in that particular place, just as in the universe, all the lines of science are there: it is a unity of all the lines. Now, when you go, or we go to the University, we don't go on to all the lines; we go on to one. We read Art, or History. That is, a line in all the lines of the University. But, mark you, when you come to the Lord Jesus, you come to a Universe, a comprehensive, all-inclusive centre, where you have to learn a very great many things, a vast amount there in Christ, and you are going on for all eternity, learning Christ. Christ is so comprehensive, so many-sided, so universal, so all-inclusive. There is no exhausting Him. Those who have been on the way with Him, and in His school the longest, the greatest number of years; and even most concentrated, devoted and earnest in their application to know Him, at the end of long years, they know they have hardly started. They know that they are only at the beginning, on the fringe, of the knowledge of Christ. When we begin to 'learn of Christ', we have come into, indeed, a University, and we have got to read in every subject! Now, does that appal or disconcert you? Well, it need not, it need not — you have got all eternity, the ages of the ages for it! And the blessed thing about this is, that He takes us a bit at a time; He does not cram us. There is no cramming in Christ (some of you know what cramming means!) no forcing. He takes us a bit at a time, and sees to it that we just know that. It may be a small thing comparatively, but it is important and there is nothing unimportant here. He takes us in hand, and holds us until we know that. And it is not an end in itself that we should know it. This is *education for vocation*, make no mistake about it. The whole of this life here, shorter or longer, is a part of our education for eternal vocation. Probably that is the chief feature about our life here, for one thing becomes very clear. Before you have got very far, the Lord is far more concerned about

your spiritual education than He is about how much, or how many, things you do for Him. He is quite prepared to take you out of all the 'doing' to see to it that you are 'learning'. And the Lord makes the 'doing' so often our education. The 'doing' is not the end; the 'education' is. For the vocation lies ahead; it is 'unto the ages of the ages'. "*Learn of Me*" — how great Christ is, you and I will learn more and more as we go along.

At the early stages of our Christian lives, we think we know enough to go out, but as we go on, the fact is that we feel that we had better get back and learn something, and not go quite so fast. We don't know what we need to know; it is better to draw back.

Well now, what I am saying, if you realise it, is this: this learning, servanthood and service, is not an academic thing, nor is it a verbal thing. It is by reason of a vital, spiritual union with Christ. It is learning a Person. If you can grasp that, and hold it, and hold it always, do. It is not learning things; it is not learning doctrines and truths; it is not even learning Scripture: these things have their place, but real service to God is going to come out of 'learning Christ', learning *Christ* - and that requires living with Him.

Well, that He is the great Servant needs no arguing; it is Self-declared. "*I am among you*", He said, "*as He that serves.*" He spoke of those who take their seats at the table, but He said, I am not one of those; I am the servant to wait on you; I am here as the servant. Paul, in that classic phrase, says; about His condescension from heaven: "*He took upon Him the form of a bond-slave ...*", a servant, the Authorised Version calls it. Well, it is self-declared, that that is the capacity in which He was in this world. With the garments of glory laid aside, and the towel of service girded, the waters of purification in the basin and in hand, down on His knees, to potential servants, to teach them how to serve, or the 'spirit of service'. So He was here.

We have spoken of all those passages in Isaiah's prophecy, which predict His servanthood. We need not go over again how many there are of those pre-visionings of Him in those prophecies, as the *servant* of the Lord.

What we want to do, and what we must do, is to look at Him to see the characteristics of the true servant in whom God's heart is delighted. And I want to say, first of all, about Him, and therefore about all who will be, or would be, true servants of God, in the true servanthood, that He was, first of all, marked by a divine compulsion. Let it be understood at once and take this to heart that there is *nothing* voluntary about this. If you do come in, and it seems that you are doing it by offer, even that must be the result of a compulsion. He is here described as a *bond-slave* - that is the original term for our English word 'servant': a *bond-slave*, not a volunteer. A bond-slave is not a volunteer at all; there is nothing about this that is optional; there is nothing about it that is casual. A bond-slave is purchased, is owned, possessed, and without any rights of his own. That is a bond-slave. A bond-slave has his very life bound up with his position as a bond-slave. He has not got a life of his own. Let one of those bond-slaves of old run away and escape, anybody can kill him. He can be killed; his life can be taken; there is no fuss made about it; it is a recognized thing. As a bond-slave his own life is forfeit one way or the other: it is either for his master, or, it will be taken from him, or can be. This is a tremendous thing, this bond-slave idea. The bond-slave was even *branded*. And the brand was not the brand of his own rights to himself; it was the brand of his master, or of that authority to which he was given. Paul said: "*I bear branded in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*" Paul would, in his constant usage of this very term concerning himself, 'the bond-slave of Jesus Christ', would repudiate any suggestion that he had a life of his own, that he had any rights of his own, "*For me to live is Christ.*" It was a matter of life or death, this service. It is very much different from the common ideas of servanthood, or Christian service. You can resign, if you do not like it; you can change from one place to another if you are not pleased; you can run away; you can do anything today without any compulsion. If you are a true servant of Jesus Christ, if you learn of Him, you will find this to be true. All these things were true of the Lord Jesus. Need I say

that it was not the compulsion of *Law*; it was not the compulsion of the Labour Tribunal — directed to this or that; it was the compulsion of heart, the compulsion of love, it was the captivity of the will - His will was in the slavery of the Father! How He emphasized that: "*I came not to do my will, but the will of Him that sent Me.*" "*My meat and My drink*" — My very subsistence, is to do the will of My Father. From beginning to end, it was the complete captivation of His will by the will of Another; the compulsion of another will! Only such servanthood really reached God's end, serves God's purpose. It is really this, dear friends, or has got to be this: A deep-down *urge* of a sense of destiny! "*Ye did not choose me; but I chose you ... and sent you*", or, 'ordained you', "*that you should go and bear fruit.*" Something has happened that did not take its rise in us; that we did not decide, out from ourselves, to 'go into the Lord's work', into 'Christian service'. A deep-down urge! Do you know what that means?

I remember many years ago, when I used to read fiction, interesting books, I was very interested in some books by a writer, whom perhaps this generation does not know, called Jack London. And one of his books was 'The Call of the Wild', and it was about a wolf-dog, which had become domesticated, and attached to a home, and a family. But in the blood of this dog, there was always the wild! And while he was lying there on the hearth asleep, he was groaning and straining. His whole being was under tension; and his teeth and his lips were moving. Jack London called it 'the call of the wild'. That although here, in these pleasant surroundings and circumstances, that 'wild' to which he belonged by nature, was ever pulling, ever calling; he could never, never be wholly here, because he belonged there! Is that a good illustration? Perhaps if you were brought up in a certain place, it was not too bad — a certain country — there are times when the 'call' of your own, perhaps native land, those early associations rise, and you feel you must go. It just comes, without your thinking about it, and without your planning anything; it just comes up in you, and you have to go. Do you know what I mean? This is what I mean by a sense of destiny, a sense of a deep-down urge — something has happened in us. We don't belong to ourselves; we don't belong here; we cannot just plan our own lives; there is something that has laid hold of us deep down in our being, and that thing will not let us rest. That was *the law of the servanthood of Jesus Christ*. It comes out in different ways again and again. Heaven was in His veins, shall I say? The Father's will was in His constitution; something was at work in Him like a mighty urge, until He could not rest. "*I must ... I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work.*" 'I must ... I must ...'. The imperative of God in Him. That is the first principle of His servanthood — "*learn of Me*". Oh that the Lord would deliver us from this casual, like or dislike, choosing, preferring, willing or not willing, and put us under the mighty drive of the Holy Spirit, that there is something in us all, that we cannot just be passengers; we cannot just be luggage; we are in the tremendous business of heaven. That is the Servant of the Lord as represented by Christ; He was like that!

I believe that this is the meaning of the Holy Spirit being in us. I believe that the Holy Spirit is like that. That if you or I come under the mastery of the Holy Spirit, we have lost all right to ourselves; we have lost all self-direction, and all our own prerogatives. We will not rest; we may say we are going to give it up! We may try. I would not like to tell you how many times I have tried, and said: No more, no more! But here I am. And not, not just because I changed my mind. Forgive me putting it in that personal way, but this is what we have got to learn from Christ. The Holy Spirit in Him was an energy like this. And that is what it means, among other things, to have the Spirit. Oh, do ask the Lord to rob you of yourself, to rob you of your own will, in this sense; and take you out under this tremendous impulse, the *compulsion of God*. That is the first thing about this Servant, and we could spend much more time on that. But think about it. Go back to the story of His life, with that thought, and you cannot explain His life on any other ground. One phrase He lifted from the Old Testament, or, was lifted from the Old Testament, as descriptive of Him which was the only way those who watched Him could describe and define Him was, "*The zeal of thine house hath eaten Me up.*" Are you 'eaten up'? Oh, God

forgive us that we lack this Spirit. God's end will only be reached as we take our servanthood from Him in that respect.

One other thing I will mention now as so clear in Him, so true of Him. It is what we mean when we use the word, which many people misunderstand and misinterpret, the word 'vision'. I am not thinking about objective visions. I am not thinking about 'seeing things' as people say. Not that. When you come to the Lord Jesus, yes, to the prophets, you find that their service was the expression of a vision. The Lord Jesus Himself put it this way: "*The Son can do nothing out from Himself, but whatsoever He sees the Father doing; ... these the Son also doeth ...*". 'The works that I do ... the words that I speak ... they are not Mine'; "*Whatsoever He sees the Father doing ...*'. Now, we do not think or believe for a moment that He was 'seeing things'. But, there was this great reality about His spirit, that it was governed by that true faculty of the spirit-intuition. We have sought to point out that angels do not obey God by verbal instructions. Spirits don't do that; spirits do not do things because they are told in so many words and sounds to do them. Spiritual people, or spiritual beings, do intuitively. You know the difference; there is a great deal of difference. Some people have to be told everything that they are to do and have everything pointed out before they do anything. There are others that have such a sensitive relationship to the person to whom they are committed, whom they are serving, that they know what that person wants done, or how that person would do it — intuitively — they do not have to be told. And that is how all spiritual beings do the will of God. And because Jesus had a spirit so atune to God, He intuitively knew when, or when not, to do something; when, or when not to say anything; when the time was for speaking, and when the time was for being silent — and some of His silences were thunderclaps! Is that a contradiction? They are terrific. Those poor rulers in the Judgment Hall felt the terrific impact of His silence — the silence that is terrific, if it is the silence of God. You see what I mean: that is the meaning of His 'vision' — a sensitiveness. Here, then, you go back to Isaiah, to this Servant, and in the description of Him, you have this: "*He shall be quick of scent in the fear of the Lord*". Quick of scent in the fear of the Lord, And I understand that 'the fear of the Lord' to mean, so abandoned to the Lord as to have no place for his own will, and his own interests. "*Quick of scent in the fear of the Lord*". "He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor after the hearing of his ears." No, deeper down — righteous judgment. Not by appearances and sounds, but something in the spirit. This is the servant; this is vision.

Now, you may say, That is all very well for Him, being what He was, but what about us? But I want to say that that law holds and obtains, holds good, as the law of all service and servanthood. You and I must have, though imperfect, and capable of much enlargement, a basic revelation of Jesus Christ, if we are going to be of any real service to God — a basic seeing of Him. Christ is the *object* of service, not only the *way* of service. Christ is the very nature of service; it is Himself. Christ is the end of service. Service is Christ! And we can never effectively serve, only insofar as we have seen Him, and are seeing Him. It is only another way of saying 'learning Him'. Now, the apostle Paul put the whole of his life and work upon that basis. He said: "*It pleased God to reveal his Son in me, that I might proclaim him among the nations*" — there is your basis. 'Reveal His Son in me ...'. Oh, I know how difficult this is for you to grasp and wrestle with mentally. Perhaps you do know what I am talking about. I know this — I know it as well as I know anything, if I know anything at all — that, only as I see Christ as God's Pattern and Model in everything, can I do anything. That is the guide; that is the inspiration of everything; that is the necessity in our work; it is not just getting an idea of doing things, and starting out to do them: it is in this matter, by the Holy Spirit, seeing that that is the way that Christ is taking you. Oh, I wish I could explain, but you can know in your Spirit that Christ is going in a certain way, or you can know, well, He is not going that way. You may assay, but you know that He is not going. If you go, you are going without Him; you know it inside. Or, on the other hand, you can know, that is the way He is going, and as you turn your face in that direction, you know that He is with you in that.

Paul said he went up to Jerusalem by revelation of Jesus Christ. What did he mean? He meant, Jesus Christ was going to Jerusalem at that time, in him. The call in him, was that way. The draw in him was that way. There were times when he assayed to go in certain directions, and Jesus was not going then that way, and he said: "*The Spirit of Jesus suffered us not.*" You see? That is what I mean. Strange and difficult as it may sound, but it is true spiritual 'politics'. These are the very realities of a life with God. And this is the basis of that which gets to God's end. Go off if you like, and do a thousand things by your own initiative, but if it is not like this — strange and difficult as the language is it by revelation of Jesus Christ, by seeing, discerning and sensing in your own heart, that that is the way of the Lord, it will all come to nothing. Let it be like this, things will happen; it will be vital; there will be consequences. And this is after all, what He meant by 'abiding in Me, so shall ye bring forth much fruit'. "*Abide in Me ... as the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, neither can ye except ye abide in Me. For, separated from Me ye can do nothing.*" Go on, try as much as you like — No, nothing, *nothing*, is the verdict. Oh yes, *do* all these things, but 'Nothing' will be the verdict, if it is not the movement of Christ. We have to *know* in the spirit; *know* the Lord, for that.

Now, young Christians, don't be distressed and appalled by what seems to be so complicated and difficult. I have said before, He teaches us very carefully and slowly and gently; we learn these things 'line upon line' and 'precept upon precept', but they are very real. And you cannot look at this great servant of the Lord, look at his life, without seeing that this, this was the basis of his life; he was seeing in his heart that God would or would not do this at that time. He was seeing it. Spiritual vision is a real thing though so difficult to explain. 'I see that the Lord is not in that; I see that the Lord is not after that; I see that the Lord does not want that; I see that the Lord is after this.' Well, that is simple language, for that is what it means — the eye open within. The vision of Jesus Christ in the spirit. Now, that was a law of his life; all His service was governed by this law of spiritual *seeing*. We would all rise and say: His life had no waste in it; his service never at any point, miscarried. Oh, how eternally and universally, effective and fruitful, was His servanthood. It had its laws, its principles, its nature, and these were two of them: this mighty compulsion of God in His being; and this spiritual discerning, seeing, perceiving, the way the Father was going, what the Father was doing.

And if you do feel more confused than otherwise, if you do not know what it all means, what it is all about, believe me, it is very true, and you can ask the Lord to teach you. Because if you belong to Him, you belong to Him with a great vocation in view, and unto the fulfilment of that, you have to learn, and learn, and learn, right from the beginning, like a child. We have to learn the alphabet all over again, for we do not know this language of heaven; learn all this way of heaven, as right from the beginning. And it is good to be like that, I am sometimes glad that I did not learn what little I have 'in the schools', I *never* got it from someone else. I am very glad of that often, because there is an originality about 'learning of the Lord'; it puts you on your own feet, and what you know, you know for yourself. I do not know if any of you read that delightful little book by Isobel Kuhn, 'By Searching'. If you have not, read it; it will not take you long to read it. But I might illustrate what I mean at the end. I had never thought of this before - but here it is, the story of one who came into no small knowledge of the Lord, a rich knowledge of the Lord; and whose life represented some very real values for the Lord and became a real servant of Jesus Christ.

She went, as a girl, to college, with her parents' faith, the Christianity of her parents. When she got there, her professor was completely 'modern', and was almost assuming, and taking it for granted that all were of his own mind in the class: that Genesis was just full of fables, not true to fact, and so on. He was talking like this, and said: Of course you all, now, do not believe in the story of Creation and so on, as we have it in the Bible. But perhaps somebody here does believe that still; perhaps I had better not assume that ...

Anybody here who still holds onto those old-fashioned ideas, when every sensible person has given them up? And she rather fearfully put up her hand, and said: I do. And there was one other in the class - a large class (I don't remember how many), put up her hand, feebly; two in the whole class. The Professor just scorned them, made fun of them. 'That is your tradition, I suppose!' It sent her back. She went back with this big question: Is this my faith, or is it second-hand? Is it something I have got from my parents? Is this my parents' faith? She forgot it all, and went right back into the world. Young people, don't follow! She said: I am going to have a faith of my own, or I am not going to have any at all. Well, she put the whole thing to the test, and in the end, she came to a personal salvation and knowledge of the Lord. But I mentioned it this way. You see, it just will not do, to be a Christian on a basis like that; it just won't do to go out, as she was intending to do, to the Mission Field, on that ground. You have got to come to the place where you know, you know, and no one else knows better than you do! That is a kind of conceit that may be justifiable for the time being. You know!

One of our young men of years ago was here, and, for a long time, I had been striking one note. I had been constantly striking the note of "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*", repeating this, trying to drive it home. He was here all the time. Well, that phase passed, as these things do. One day that young man got up and gave a word, and he said: 'I have made a discovery; I have discovered that Christ is in me.' And you could see he had made the discovery — he was radiant! And do you know, he went all round telling everybody 'Christ in you, the hope of glory!' And I said to him: Yes, but I have been saying that for I don't know how long! He said: 'So you have; so you have; yes, I know now, you have been saying this for a long time! It never meant anything to me.' And he talked about it, you know, as though I did not know anything about it at all. And no one else knew anything about it! He was the only one in this vast universe who knew the meaning of "*Christ in you*". Well, that is alright. We will forgive you that; we will forgive you any kind of conceit of that kind. But, you see the point; it must be like that. You must have seen the Lord; you must know the Lord; Christ *knew* the Father. He *knew* His Father; He *knew* His God, and out of that His service came.

Chapter 3 – The Spiritual Impress of the Bond-slave

We will turn again to the prophecies of Isaiah, chapter 9, at verse 6:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgement and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall perform this."

Chapter 61:

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn ...", and so on.

We are being engaged in this conference, at present, with 'the servant of the Lord'. The basic fragment is from chapter 40 of these prophecies: "Behold My servant".

When we put these two passages that we have read, together, a question arises. If He was all that, which we have in chapter 9, "*Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace*" — why was it necessary for Him to be anointed with the Holy Spirit, for it is the same Person, in chapter 61 as in chapter 9? Is not that description of Him the description of One who is perfectly Self-sufficient? What could be added to that? What necessity had He to be anointed with the Holy Spirit? Of course, the answer is found in the chapters between those two, and especially in what we have called 'The Servant chapters'. The capacity in which He came into this world, as He took upon Him the form of a bond-slave. His life, ministry, work, here, were not in virtue of His essential Deity, not in the virtue of His Personal, inherent Godhead, but here, as a Man — servant-wise; everything was done, and His whole life lived, in virtue of an endowment, an anointing. He Himself very forcefully repudiated and undercut any idea that He was able to do, or to say, anything out from Himself. Even in speaking of Himself as the Son, He was emphatic in saying, and repeatedly emphatic in saying: "*The Son can do nothing 'out from' Himself*". He described Himself as "*meek and lowly in heart*", and that is the language of dependence, not of self-sufficiency. And here is something that is very important for us to recognise, and especially so for ourselves. Jesus was different from other men, and He was more than other men. That difference was either definitely recognised and noted or it was subtly sensed by the people of His day that He was different. He was different in His mental faculties. His wisdom and knowledge and understanding, were of a different order; it was not 'of the schools' — "*Whence hath this man this knowledge, having never been taught?*" In other words, 'having never been in the schools'. The most subtle attempts to trap Him and ensnare Him in arguments, and to corner Him by the best brains of the nation, found them very quickly in the corner, and He, out in the open, and they had to go away, again and again, completely worsted. But it was of another 'order'; it was different.

This difference was also found in His spiritual faculties: His discernment, His perception. How often it is said: "*And Jesus perceiving their thoughts ...*", before anything was said! "*... knowing what was in their hearts*" — His judgment of situations was different.

The difference was found in His sympathetic faculties — His understanding of people — what a lot His disciples owed to His understanding of them. His understanding; His compassion; His forbearance and patience; He was different. Ask yourself how you would have acted in the case of the twelve. But it is written over all their difficult make-up;

over all the trouble He had with them: "*having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them to the end*"! He was different.

And I think we could say He was different in His physical capacity. His powers of endurance and what He achieved in so short a time, physically, were extraordinary. It is a study in itself. He spent His nights in prayer, without any relaxation; there was a continuous drain upon Him. It made its mark, we know. But, nevertheless, there is something different here in every part of His being.

And then He had a significance among men, which was unmistakable. This One signified something. He was not lost in the multitude and in the mass; but He was unmistakably significant. He made an impression wherever He went. Yes, He was different, and He was more.

And yet ... let it be clearly understood, it was all derived. It was not just a man: it was a Man, with God united! It was a Man, who was not himself extraordinary, but was extraordinary because, in the anointing, God had joined Himself with Him as a Man. It is not here. His essential inherent Deity is His Manhood, with God added. It was derived. And, from beginning to end, He was in a state of complete dependence upon that other than Himself. If that is not true, then He cannot help us. But that is true, and that is just where He does help us.

Yes, He was not just an *extra*-ordinary man among men. He was a Man, but a different Man. There was this difference. In Him was recovered the man God intended every man to be, and God never intended every man to be God, or Deity. God intended from the beginning to have man with Himself in union; and here He is; — the man, of God's original intention and thought, recovered.

Hence there are two things that the Bible, shall we say the Holy Spirit, takes very great care to make clear about Him. The first thing is: the denuding of Him of all things that other men require for significance. For, having, or taking on, any significance, other men must have certain things. Well they must have education; they must have money or riches; they must have, perhaps, 'birth', and what that means; position; important friends, and helpers — friends at court; influence at work on their behalf; patronage; or, they must be possessed of forcefulness of personality and assertiveness. All these things and others with them, that other men must have to give them significance. They call these things away, and the very foundations of human accountableness are removed. But, what we have is a very careful, meticulous and thorough denuding of Him of all those things; He had not one of them. He was 'a root out of the dry ground' — that was the point to which the House of David had come. So that all that had been in past generations was now dried up. He had nothing by birth, only something remote from His present position. He had no riches; He had to work a miracle to pay a tax! He had no education in the academic sense; they recognised this, "having never learned". No doubt, He, as a boy, did His amount of schooling, but that is not what we are talking about. It is this 'higher' realm that you must have in this world, if you are going to count for anything. No, He had no patronage; He had no influential friends; no friends 'at court'; and, these other personal things were lacking. No forcefulness or assertiveness of His own. We read: "*Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him ... He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench ...*". That is not personal assertiveness, forcefulness, obtrusiveness and ostentatiousness. Quietness, reserve, gentleness ... No, all this from birth to cross, is one story of how utterly lacking were all those things that go to make a man important in this world, to give him any significance. And yet He was more significant than all the others but His significance, His accountableness, rested upon nothing in this world; it rested upon another basis altogether. How meek and lowly He was! How unassuming, unobtrusive and quiet! Yet, how forceful!

All that I have said, to which much could be added, about the impact and registration of this Man in this world, could not be exaggerated. He, in a phrase, "could not be hid". He sometimes tried to hide Himself, but He just could not hide Himself in that sense.

The second thing that is made so clear about Him is the place that the Holy Spirit had in His life from birth onwards. Everything is attributed to the Holy Spirit, from infancy to manhood, and then in His public work from the Jordan onwards is all attributed to the Spirit. His whole significance then, is made perfectly clear, as resting upon the Holy Spirit, and not upon what He was Himself as Man. Yes, and in the last terrible moments the momentary withdrawing of the Spirit, His forsakenness found Him as capable of despair and brokenheartedness as any other man! He tasted the despair that any other man can know, and outside of Christ will know, when made fully alive to separation from God.

But what is the message for us? Firstly, this anointing is the 'new-birth' right of every consecrated believer. There is no mistaking that if you read the New Testament. The Holy Spirit is the birthright of every born-again and consecrated child of God — the same Spirit. And that means that if we have the same Spirit as He had, and He has only recovered to God the kind of man that ever God intended us to be; if we have received the Spirit, that Spirit gives a significance to us that is other and more, which is different and extra. Every child of God, and every consecrated believer, ought to be different, and more, than other people, as He was. John says: "*As He is so are we in this world.*" It should be like that. Every Christian should take on a significance that is different, and that is more, we may say that is 'super-human', that is 'supernatural' that is more and other than we are when we are not born again. Perhaps that needs very little emphasis, but you see where that leads us. This is a fact (I do want you to take hold of it and believe it) — grasp it in faith — that in union with the Lord by the Holy Spirit, you and I are supposed, in our very constitution by new birth, to be different from others, and more than others, with faculties that are different, and that are more. It is the birthright; it is not the extra gift. If is the birthright; it ought to be in us by second nature - the 'second nature' being the divine which comes by the Holy Spirit.

But note, this significance is unique; it cannot be accounted for on any natural ground whatever. The child of God, the Holy Spirit indwelt and governed believer is inscrutable, as He was. They just could not get to the bottom of Him; they were defeated in every attempt to understand and explain Him. Again and again, when they tried to reduce Him to their level, to bring Him within their compass, they had to give it up and go away. There was something here that is not of that with which we are familiar; it is different. It is a significance which is unique; it is not just natural.

What does this amount to? Well, it means this so far as we are concerned, that there should really not be one insignificant person in the family of God. That on one side. Will you believe that? Will you take hold of that? There should not be one insignificant member of this family. In so many local families, there are always many who are just occupants of the chairs, whose voices you never hear in prayer or worship; whose presence may, or may not mean much. I do want to say to you all, that, from God's standpoint, you matter, you count, and you are intended to count. Do you really believe that if the Holy Spirit of God is in you, is resident within you, that that makes no difference, and gives you no greater value? Do you really believe that? Are you quite ready to accept that you do not count, that you are an insignificant person, and it does not matter very much, or at all? The very truth of the anointing forbids any such idea. But note, this significance is not something 'put on'. God forbid that anything that I should say should have the effect of making you assume some position, and try to be something. There is no need to assume; there is no need to presume; there is no need to pretend; there is no need to pose; there is no need to assert yourself; there is no need to take on uniform or voice, to take on the highest significance. These are all the artificial

ways of making people important, and of bringing them into prominence, or their trying to gain some notice. It is all false. You need nothing of that at all. You may be the humblest; you may have nothing by birth; nothing by education; nothing by your status; nothing at all of wealth, or popularity, or even of personality, and you may *count* more than those who have all those things without this, the indwelling Spirit — and you are supposed to. It is spontaneous; and it is unconscious. You need not try to be a leader, and take on the ways of a leader, and the voice and so on. If the Spirit of Christ is in you, and you are under the Holy Spirit's government, though all unconsciously, there is a significance about you, an influence, and a meaning in your life, that is more than that of all those who have all the other things, without the Spirit. We need to be redeemed from our inferiorities as well as our superiorities, and come to this basis of the Servant of the Lord, who wrought so mightily in His servanthood; not as a despot: not at one of this world's monarchs; not as one of the peers of knowledge and education, and worldly wisdom, not in any of those capacities, but as a *servant*, leaving His mark upon this world — a *bond-slave* — just leaving an impress everywhere, and all unconscious. That is the holy thing about it. Immediately we become self-conscious in any work of the Lord, drawing attention to ourselves, or assuming something, becoming artificial, we do despite to this Spirit of the Lord. But, all unconsciously, led and governed by the Spirit, there is something about us. And if we were asked to define it, the only thing that could be said is: The Lord is with him; the Lord is with her. You meet the Lord — that is all! Ah, but what an immense thing that is to be able to say about anybody: You just meet the Lord in that brother, or that sister. The Lord is with them. That is the essence of significance. That is the very meaning of 'leadership'. We are not looking for leaders to assume leadership, and to take on all those things men regard as marks of leadership; we are looking for men and women of this one thing — you see the Lord is with them! If you go to the Bible, you find that that is the explanation of all leadership; the definition of leadership — the Lord was with Him. It is not just natural. In many cases the natural was lacking, but they counted. In other cases, there were many natural things there, but their leadership could not be attributed to that. It was the Lord. They would not have got through; Moses would not have got through with all the learning of the Egyptians unless the Lord had been with him. With it all, again and again, he was at the point of despair, and breaking down, and giving it up. It was the Lord.

And so it was with the Lord Jesus. Do not think that He worked and lived and got through to the end because of what He was as a man in Himself. The verdict of the apostle about Him was: "*For God was with Him.*" For Himself He said: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because ...*" — all that followed was that. Mighty, Counsellor, Father of Eternity, Wonderful ... and all the rest; yet brought to the place of a dependence which gave Him His real significance. And I say again that there should not be an insignificant one in the family of the Lord. But the significance is spiritual and not natural; it is heavenly and not earthly; it is more; it is other. May the Lord make us all, every one, a significant one, in the right sense.

Chapter 4 – The Principle of Service in a Remnant

We continue in the matter that has been laid on our hearts for this time, that is: The Servant of the Lord. We are considering that little fragment in Isaiah's prophecies, chapter 62: "*Behold My servant*".

We have seen the law of service as being central to everything in this universe; that this universe exists to minister to God. We have seen that that law was established at the creation of this world and man, when immediately upon His being constituted, He was given a trust to hold everything, develop everything, for God. And that law being established at the beginning, is seen to run right through the Bible and at last, is seen in the eternal state, where and when His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face. It is a long story of service and servanthood, ministering to the pleasure and glory of God.

Then, we have seen the method and means of service. We saw a nation, chosen and separated, particularly and specifically to minister to the pleasure of God, the Lord saying to Pharaoh: "*Let My people go that they may serve Me.*" God wanted a whole nation at the centre of the nations, to be the embodiment of this universal principle of service, and to lead the nations to it. And we saw that that nation, elect for that purpose, as a whole, failed sadly and terribly. And then God moving in, and in these prophecies of Isaiah, in a large section, that Servant being introduced and presented, who completely and perfectly fulfilled in every respect, that law of service, that satisfaction to God. The Servant of the Lord — the One referred to in our passage, "*Behold My servant*".

And having foreshadowed, predicted and previsioned that servant, the next movement, in the time of the whole nation's failure, was to deposit the principle of service in a remnant. And so we come on to the very many references in these prophecies and others, to 'the remnant' as being God's repository of the service of the Servant of the Lord; that is, to take character from Him, and to carry forward this great responsibility and privilege and trust, of ministering to the Lord. That is, in the Old Testament, a figure of the divine thought.

Passing into the New Testament, that nation set aside, that Servant, not now in prediction, but in presence, right here, on the spot, fulfilling His ministry, His servanthood, and perfecting it. Then, the bringing in or a nation to take the place of that nation that has failed, fulfilling of the Word of the Lord: "*The kingdom of heaven shall be taken away from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*" A new nation brought in, which Peter calls "*a holy nation*", that is, the church. Then, too soon, repetition of general failure and a repetition of the Lord's method and means — an appeal to those within the general body, which will form for Him this 'remnant' of this dispensation, to take up and carry forward, and represent the principle, the law, of God's satisfaction, God's pleasure for which everything was created.

That has occupied us for quite a time and we must not take more time in retrospect. Now we come back to a part of Isaiah's prophecies, to a part which you may think has been worn threadbare, but it is a 'cameo' of this whole subject or matter. I refer to the sixth chapter, the words are so familiar to you, but I feel quite sure the Lord wants something said about this at this time.

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, ... so the holy seed is the stock thereof" (Isaiah 6:1-13).

In this we have the whole history of the nation embodied, and we shall try, as quickly as possible, with so much ground, to see the outline, at least, of what is here.

First of all we are in the presence of the tragedy of a great epoch. The reign of king Uzziah had been one of the most glorious in Israel; indeed, a very bright spot in a long, dark, troubled period. Uzziah had come to a great eminence, and a great glory. And like humanity so commonly, unable to carry the responsibility of prosperity. Like the great enemy of God and men, his heart was lifted up, and when that happens, that is the beginning of the end of that glory, of that epoch; disaster is not far away. And so, in the uplifted heart, in his pride, Uzziah presumed upon his heritage, his position, and the blessing of God and took the holy things into His own hands. And you know the story: as he was doing it, he was suddenly smitten with leprosy, went out of the presence of the Lord, and for the rest of his life, lived in the seclusion of a leper, and then died! That is the story of the nation; the nation had come to a place of great eminence among the nations; great prosperity, power, riches and influence. And then they began to presume upon it, take it for granted, to think that because there was much blessing, the prospering of the Lord, well, nothing mattered — Do as you like! And the hands of men took hold of the holy things, to use them for their own ends. That was the story of Israel. I suggest to you that is very largely the story of the church. We are always looking back to the great days of the church — what great days they were! What power! What blessing! The presence of God so manifestly in their midst. And then, the whole thing taken into the hands of men, and used for human glory — the introduction of a whole system of people, with high-flown names and titles and all that, and men coming into prominence, and the church becoming a sporting ground of the flesh, in that form of human glory. And the days of the church's blessing were numbered, and, as it were it was 'smitten with leprosy'? Well, may be! Nevertheless, tragedy, at the end of a glorious epoch, just as with Uzziah.

It was at that point that God intervened with Isaiah, and through Isaiah, with the Servant of the Lord, in Isaiah himself, his experience and his history, there was very much that was true in the case of The Great Servant, his Master, our Lord Jesus. That is why I have called him a cameo of the whole. That situation called for, demanded, a heavenly intervention; when the earthly fell into tragedy, and had to be left so largely — at least, without its primal and pristine glory. And Isaiah became the figure, the type, of the heavenly intervention at such a time. I need not, I think, make the correspondence on every point; it is so patent that it was when the fulness of that tragedy was reached in Israel, that heaven intervened with the greatest Prophet, the Lord Jesus. Heaven broke in a great reaction against that tragic state, and produced the Servant of God to deal with it. The Lord Jesus came at a time like that, a time of terrible tragedy in the realm of the people of God. And here is heaven's breaking in, and Isaiah.

Now, it is just there that we have so much enlightenment and instruction: "*In the year that king Uzziah died ...*". You could put that in many other ways: "In such and such a time, when such and such conditions obtained ...". "*I saw the Lord.*" Against the dark failure of breakdown and tragedy, a heavenly Vision is given. Let me underline one word — a *heavenly* vision — for here is a transition from the earthly to the heavenly. Heaven takes charge; heaven breaks in; and that is the way of recovery, the way of salvation — what Paul called: The heavenly vision.

What was it? What were its components? First of all: "*I saw the Lord high and lifted up*". Now you know that that phrase, 'high and lifted up' is used immediately in the context of 'the servant of the Lord' — My Servant. In chapter 13 we read, "*Behold, My servant shall be high and lifted up*", and it is surely very impressive that John, in writing his Gospel, as we have it in chapter 12, verse 41, refers to Isaiah 6, these words, and says: "These things said Isaiah, when he saw" (Jesus?), 'when he saw Him'. Who was it that Isaiah saw 'high and lifted up'? Well, John says it was Jesus. And that is always the beginning of a great change in the situation. It is always God's new beginning, to see Him high and lifted up. Uzziah, and all that he represents, may have fallen, like a fallen idol, as he had been, but there is One high and lifted up to save the situation.

The exaltation of the Lord Jesus means firstly, that a work has been accomplished and finished, upon which the future rests with certainty. He never was 'high and lifted up', exalted and glorified, until He had finished His Servant work; and upon that the whole future was founded. The work was accomplished; His universal authority was established. All authority in heaven and in earth was given to Him, as He took His place at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. His Name is enthroned above all rule and authority, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but in that which is to come.

From that God begins again. He did with Isaiah. For whatever there was to be of recovery, even though it ever but be in a remnant, and even that, so imperfectly, nevertheless, some recovery, to which the Lord referred with not a little pleasure: "*My peculiar treasure*", He called the remnant. That issued from this vision. The Lord, high and lifted up! If it is as true of the church as it was of Israel that there has been loss and tragedy, and those first glorious conditions have faded, as everybody acknowledges and recognises, without any criticism or unwarranted criticism of the church, it is true. We all look back to those days as the hey-days of the church, do we not? If the church has, speaking quite generally, followed in the train of Israel, lost its great vocation as the servant of the Lord, God will begin, as He has always, by someone, or some people, a remnant, if you like, a corporate person, to obtain a new revelation and apprehension of the greatness of Christ. It is the only way, but it is the sure way — it is God's way: the greatness of Christ; the over-lordship of Christ; the absolute supremacy of Christ — Christ over all, in all, through all — high and lifted up. That is God's method, and the whole purpose of the dispensations. It is His method with every individual life. If the glow and glory of Christian experience of former days has faded into shadows has faded into shadows or even darkness; if you, in your own spiritual life, are a tragedy; what will save you will be if you can get a new apprehension of the greatness of Christ. And that is God's way. Turn your eyes from your tragedy, from yourself, from your Uzziahs, and from all things around, and lift them up, and see Him 'high and lifted up' — great enough to cope with *your* tragedy; and great enough to cope with a universe as well as of a church! "*I saw the Lord high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.*"

In the heavenly vision, things passed from the tragic temple in Jerusalem to the temple in heaven. Isaiah saw a heavenly temple, substituting the earthly which had failed — a heavenly House of God. This is the second move in the way of recovery. Do you notice how true to principle this is: according to the New Testament, firstly, always firstly, the greatness of Christ, the exaltation of Christ. That is always the beginning. And then the greatness of the church, the greatness of the House of God, the greatness of that conception and that reality, of a place of God's dwelling. But now we know that the earthly thing is in tragedy, and you are not going to rebuild that; you are not going to recover the earthly thing; the church now is a heavenly thing. It is only as you and I get onto heavenly ground that you and I can be an expression of the church and of its unity and its life. Touch this earth, and you touch everything that divides; everything that brings strife; everything that is a contradiction to that divine idea. Get off the earthly ground of things and people, and get on to heavenly ground, and at once a new kind of church comes into evidence; it is a heavenly thing.

First, the Head of the church. First, the Lord high and lifted up, and then the temple of the Lord, which He fills. It is substituting the earthly for the heavenly. May the Lord deliver us from our earthly ideas, and our earthly limitations and conceptions; our earthly bondages. Oh, how contradictory the 'earthly' church is! It is not the church, according to God's mind. "*And His skirts filled the temple*", filled the house. This is symbolic language. Here in this heavenly temple, or house, or church, Christ is all-pervading, and all inclusive. Here He fills all things; there is no room for anyone or anything else. His filling His House just means that there is no place for anything earthly, persons or things; there is no place for what is of this world. He is, in the eternal counsels of God, appointed and destined to *fill* all things, and the first place of His 'filling' is His own House, the church.

That is very testing, is it not? For, after all, men have come into the House of God, and things have been brought in. There is very much today, which corresponds to the conditions of the days when the Lord was here in the flesh, concerning which He could repeat His words: 'Take these things hence; they do not belong to My Father's House; they are not in keeping with the habitation, the dwelling, of the Lord. Take them out!' But this heavenly House is filled with Christ. The 'garments' or the 'skirts' are only symbolic of Himself, of His fulness; all-pervading. So that man is deposed, and has no place here as man. And just as Uzziah was driven out the priests took and drove him out of the temple, room has to be made for the Lord in His heavenly House.

And then the next thing in the vision, the heavenly vision, is of the heavenly servants, and their service. Here they are called 'the seraphim'. I saw the seraphim; "*above him were the seraphim*" — heavenly servants, fulfilling heavenly ministry. '*They each had six wings*', and their wings had different kinds of features of their heavenly service. "*With two they covered (or, veiled) their faces*". This service, which is going to bring God His satisfaction; and reach His end; and fulfil His purpose; and be according to His original intention; this service is carried out, and carried through, in a spirit of deep reverence, humility and awe. How contrary to the flesh! I suppose these seraphim were themselves beautiful and glorious beings. In other places you find that is so. But they covered it in the presence of the Lord. Whatever they were in themselves, they covered it in the presence of the Lord, and in the service of the Lord; they hid themselves. That is very different, is it not, from a very great deal of what is called 'Christian work'. It is used to bring men into prominence. How many there are who uncover themselves in the work of the Lord, and you only see them; you encounter them; they are in view. But these, who fulfil the true, heavenly ministry to God, cover themselves. It is in a spirit of deep, reverent awe, humility, that it is fulfilled.

"*With two they covered their feet*" — feet, symbols of their goings, their walk, their ways, their work. And this was all very much under cover, under government, all very much in subjection to the throne; they are before the throne; they are in the presence of the Holy God, and all their ways, their walk, and their work, is governed by this sense of holiness, and reverence. It is a 'subject' life under the Lord's government. These are not just running hither and thither, doing this and doing that, according to their own whims and fancies, and impulses and ideas. It is all governed, under the restraint of heaven — "they covered their feet."

"*And with two they fly.*" Their flying is only at His behest; all their goings are in obedience to Him. They fly to do His will; their flying will be very swift, and very immediate. To discern intuitively His mind about any matter, will find them instantly off to do it. This is the nature of the servant of the Lord: obedient, governed, restrained, humble, reverent, yet swift to do His will when it is known.

"*And one cried to the other, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts*". I think that is the essence of everything; the essence of all their ministry; the essence of all heavenly ministry. When you come to get a look into heaven at any time, in the Bible, what is it that you find that is going on in heaven? Worship, worship, unceasing worship! That is the great thing that comes out in the consummation, in the book of the Revelation. Things now are at the end. We live in the consummation of the ages. God is in the possession of the realisation of His purpose through the Lamb, and heaven is just filled with worship. It is worship, worship, worship; that is heavenly ministry. Worship, of course, is the service of the Lord, because worship is God having His rights; everything coming back to the Lord; everything being drawn God-ward. From the earth, from all things, held for Him; directed towards Him; He is the centre and every stream flows towards Him. That is the meaning of worship, and that is the ultimate and supreme service. "*They worship the Lord.*" Worship should characterise everything in our lives. Our homes should be held for the Lord, that they become not just places, where we have perhaps five or ten minutes, or an hour or two, of prayer, and worshipping the Lord; the

whole thing should be for the Lord. And everything that we have should be a matter of worship. We hold everything for God; our whole lives should be God-ward in every matter. That is service! That is servanthood: to see that God has His place and His rights, and comes into everything. *"One cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts."*

And the next: what we might expect, and what would certainly happen, if this did come to us as a vision; if ours were an open heaven like this - the servant's undoing; the servant's undoing! "Woe is me"! Woe is me ... With all that could be said to profit on that matter, let me sum it up by saying this: You will never be a servant of the Lord according to Jesus Christ, on His principle of service, until you have come very low at the feet of God. Oh, how He honoured the Father! How ever and always He was the slave of His Father's honour and glory! And while it was never His, of Himself, to say that He personally was unclean, 'a man of unclean lips', for us, dear friends, let there be no mistake about it, the way of servanthood is the way of the shattering of this self-life; the exposing of our own corruption. Does that bring you some hope? I struggled to take some hope out of that. The Lord certainly does take infinite pains to shatter us, to break us, to bring us down to the dust, as His servants. But if this has anything to say of encouragement and comfort, it says this: This is the way of service; this is the way of greater service; the way of being able to minister to the Lord, Shall we put it the other way? Here, in this universe, somewhere, we don't know where, there was one great, glorious, being, who was a minister of God! *"The anointed cherub that covers ..."* — a glorious being — and when he became self-important, and thought to have the root of the matter in himself, and be *self-sufficient*, he lost his ministry for all eternity; he lost his place in the glory as that *great* servant of God. And that is ever true; any pride, any *self-esteem*, *self-sufficiency*, *self-confidence*, *self-centredness* of any kind, any *self-ishness*, is the way of ruined usefulness to God. Make no mistake about it. And so it was necessary, in the reaction of God to the situation, both in Israel and in the church, the vessels that come into being for His recovery purpose should be very empty, thoroughly emptied, weakened and broken, and brought to the place where there is nothing to say but: Woe is me! That opens a prospect when we get there, as it did with Isaiah: the woe; the servant's undoing first. And then, through the undoing, the anointing.

The anointing. The 'living coal from the altar' — blood soaked with the sacrifice; alive with the fire in it; 'living' coal — the Blood and the Spirit together — the twin symbols of cleansing and empowerment. Back in the Levitical system it was like that, was it not? The blood and the fire of the altar was for the cleansing of the priesthood; and that was for constituting them the servants of God — divine unction. And so, this servant was anointed. But he had to know the power of the Blood in his own experience. All true service to God has got to come from a personal knowledge of the virtue of the Blood of the Lamb. The tremendous effectiveness and efficacy of that Blood, has got to be deeply rooted, not in our doctrine and theory, but in our experience and history. Oh, the infinite value of the Blood! And, correspondingly, the infinite power of the Spirit We must know that in our experience: the fire of God, which purges, cleanses, but which also energises and vitalises. That is the servant's equipment, and when you get there -

The servant's call. Then "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Who will go for us, and whom shall I send?" That sounds very much like a contradiction of what I said earlier, that there is nothing voluntary about this service; it is compulsory. But it is not a contradiction. Think a little more below the surface. No, this service is compulsory; this service is of the bond-slave who has no option, no alternative, and no rights. And yet, here it is, suspended, so to speak, in the air: Who? Is God waiting for an answer; waiting for a volunteer? Think again. Maybe? And yet, see how everything had been very personal with this man up to this point. First of all, he had a name, Isaiah, meaning the 'Salvation of the Lord'. By his very birth and name, his ministry is implied; there is a sense of destiny in the very title that he has. Perhaps most of you do not understand that, but some of you may do. That, right from earliest days you had a sense, though

you did not know the Lord, yet you had a sense of there being something more than just this life, and this earth, and this world, bound up with your existence. It is like that. Might I illustrate from my own experience (I don't mean to imply that I am any good as a servant, but I happen to be in the Lord's service) that there is something sovereign about it. I remember, when I was a little fellow of about five, or seven years of age, a relative of mine took me to see one of those old Scottish 'divines' — the old type, of the Andrew Bonar type — a Dr. Black. Then he was the aged, eighty-two years old minister of the great Wellington church in Glasgow. And I remember (I never thought anything about this in my little life, but it occurred to me) that he took me into his study, and we sat down, and he put his hand on my shoulder, and drew me to his side, and he looked at me and said: My boy, when you grow up, are you going to be a minister? No such idea had ever occurred to me, to be a minister — I suppose it shouldn't at six or seven years old. But I remember that something stirred in me when he said that. And all, without knowing what I was saying, I simply said: I would like to be. And he put his hand on my head, and said: God bless you, my boy, and make you one of His servants. And I have to say, that though years came in, and there was not very much of the Lord's service or the Lord's glory in those years, that never left me; it held something in me like a sense of destiny.

Now, is that worth saying by way of illustration? That may be true with you, or it may not be true, but you see, Isaiah had something like that by his very name — it was there. And then, as I have said, all this was very personal to him, was it not? He had been given a heavenly vision, with all these wonderful aspects and features. He had been touched with the living coal, and he had heard the voice of the seraphim: This hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is pardoned. What more do you want to make a servant, and to convince any man that he is a man with a call, that he is, before he has committed himself, that he is apprehended of God? Well, there is nothing voluntary about that; that is all sovereign from God's side. But what about this suspended call: Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Why that seeming optional element in it? I think in order not to make him a servant; not to make him Isaiah the prophet; that was all settled in the sovereignty of God. But look at what he had got to do! Have you read the last part, the last section of the chapter? He was called to no popular work; he was called to nothing that was going to make him pleased; nothing in this that was going to give him personal gratification; no, this was no popular, no pleasant work to which he was called. Could ever a man be called to anything more heartbreaking, and more distressing? Look at it again. *"Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not."* How would you like that ministry? That is the failure of your ministry right at the outset. There is failure written over it from the beginning. *"See ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see ... and hear ... and understand ..."*. Well, what about it? The Lord does not leave us in any doubt in this matter: 'Look here, if you are going to do me true service, you are not going to be a popular preacher; you are not going to get anything out of this for yourself; you are going to have a difficult time. They indeed, for the more part, will not receive your word. They will not like what you say. And if tradition is true, Isaiah was the man who was 'sawn asunder' in the end. Martyrdom lay in the line of this ministry, this service. 'Will you accept it? Will you?' Not, 'Will you be a prophet?' Not, 'Will you be a servant?' But, 'Will you serve Me though you get nothing out of it?' That is perhaps where the voluntary element comes in. The Lord is not going to force this on us; He looks for cooperation. He wants us to know what we are involved in; He wants us to face this thing quite squarely, and look it right in the eyes, and say: This kind of ministry, of a remnant standing for God's full thought, is not what *all* Israel will take to kindly. Indeed, every kind or form of rejection will be met; you will be despised and rejected of men. He entered into the experience of the One whom he saw, the One of chapter 53: *"despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"*. Isaiah knew a lot about that. And, be sure, do not have any illusions about this; I know the ideas of young men, wanting to go into the 'ministry' or 'the Lord's work', and the 'service', and become a *great* evangelist, or a *great* preacher, or something else great! No. That is not it. The

nearer you get to the heart of God, the more deeply you are baptised into the full thought and purpose of God the smaller will be your following and clientele, the narrower will be your way of acceptance, the less popular will your ministry be: that is what is said here. Unless you, dear friends, after all this, are thinking in personal terms only, that all may be all right for a prophet like Isaiah, but where do I come into that? Have you not heard what I have been trying to say? That, this service and ministry is the service of a *company*, as well as of individuals and that you can fulfil this very service and ministry, not individually and separately, but by reason of your relatedness to a remnant, to a body of the Lord's people, who are standing for Him in this way. You can fulfil it just as truly, collectively or corporately, as individually. And you know this, that you meet all this by reason of your relationships and associations! Not because of yourself, but because of *that!* Well, I need say no more about that, but here we are, I think the situation is clearly defined as to service and the servanthood of Jesus Christ. All this was true of Him, the great Servant. And if the Master went that way, we, His lesser servants, surely should say, Here am I, send me!

Chapter 5 – Anointed to be a Herald

Reading: Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:16-21.

After the ponderous load that has been precipitated on to you through these past four messages, you will, no doubt, be relieved when I say that my message this evening is to be a very simple one; I trust not less important and vital, but quite simple. And it is from these chapters which we have read, Isaiah 61, and Luke 4.

Before we can really come to the point, to derive the real value and meaning of these chapters put together, we have to take note of this, and the significance of this, that the Lord Jesus did lift out of the prophecies of Isaiah this section, and apply it to Himself. That is far more significant than it looks to be at a glance, because of the historic setting of the words in the Old Testament, in the prophecies of Isaiah, because, undoubtedly, these words in Isaiah's prophecies had a bearing upon, or, took their force from the situation that obtained at that time. It was what existed then that gave rise to, and point to, these words: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because ...*", this and that. And that the Lord Jesus should have taken those words right out of that context, applied them to Himself, implies, or means, that He gave them another context. I don't mean the context of Himself, although that was true, but another, shall we say, historic context. You may not grasp immediately what I am getting at, but you will, I think, in a few minutes.

These are words of the prophet Isaiah, which, in his own mind, perhaps did not exclusively relate to the coming Messiah. It may have done in a secondary way, but he himself was in this - the prophet, the Lord's servant at that time. He was proclaiming to the people these things, and was saying at that time, in their condition: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor ...*", and so on. It is probable, as I say, in a secondary way, that he knew that Another was coming; he had the Messianic idea, but for him at the moment, it was contemporary; it was for that time.

It was because Israel was actually in all these conditions to which he was speaking. Now, while that was true in the case of the Lord Jesus, in the time of the Lord Jesus — that was quite true — there is this extra factor: the Lord Jesus was not making this a prophecy of something in the future; the Lord Jesus was saying: *Today* is this fulfilled; *today* is this fulfilled. It was not literally fulfilled for Israel that day, nor has it been ever since. Israel has never come into the good of this prophecy in any earthly sense; they are still outside, and yet what Jesus said about it — "Today ...". And He was constantly talking like that, about today, about now. He said to the woman of Samaria: "*Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, and now is, when neither in this mountain nor at Jerusalem shall men worship, the Father ...*", "and now is ...". This is strange — 'and now is ...'. Well, I wonder if you grasp the import of that. If this prophecy, with all its terms, is *now* in fulfilment, you cannot make a literal thing of it; you have got to make a spiritual thing of it. It is fulfilled today, but it fulfilled in a spiritual way, not in a temporal way. That is the setting of the thing, and it is very important to recognise that as you come to what the prophecy holds.

Jesus took it to Himself, and said: Today! How, today? And that, of course, is the present interpretation of this. Now, there He was, standing in the synagogue in Nazareth, in the personal fulfilment of all the prophecies of the coming Servant of the Lord. All these prophecies were the fulfilment in Himself, when He stood there as The Servant of the Lord, prefigured by Isaiah. And what we have, then, simply, is the *manifold ministry* of the servant of the Lord. How manifold, or many-sided, is this servanthood, is this service to God and man. When you have said that, you are ready to consider at least some of the aspects of this manifold servant-ministry of the Lord Jesus. And then, remember that

it is transferred to the church, to be His ministry in and through the church — that what is true of Him in these respects, is intended to be true of the church, by the same Anointing Spirit. Whether that be universal or local, the whole or the part, this is the manifold ministry which the Anointing Spirit gives, or, desires to give, and fulfil, not only in the Christ, but in and through the church. Well now, that may have sounded not so simple, but the rest is quite simple.

The servant, then, here, is presented to us in various ways. First of all, the servant as a preacher. "*The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach ...*". And the word really is 'herald'. "*The Lord hath anointed me to herald ...*" — 'to make a proclamation'. The full force of what is here is that: to make a proclamation. And when you go on to see what it is, what is contained in the proclamation, you find that there are three things. First of all, a proclamation of 'good news to the poor' — good news! The word 'gospel' in the New Testament, is just that, as you know. 'To herald, proclaim, preach, tell forth, announce, good news to the poor'. What does that mean? Well, you remember, when He did come, and He gathered His disciples, the nucleus of the new nation and the new kingdom, took them apart, "*He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Now we are back for our setting in Isaiah. Historically, Israel had lost the kingdom. This is the book, as you know, that sees them driven out, carried away, from Jerusalem and their land, into far-off Babylon, with their kingdom lost. They are now a people without a kingdom. All that that meant to Israel on this earth, for it was everything to them — what they were raised up for; that which all their interests and their possessions, and their hopes were centred. Their kings have been slain or taken captive: their kingdom has gone. Jesus steps into that situation, and says to these poor, bereft people: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is ...*". What? Not even the recovery or restoration of an earthly kingdom, but the kingdom of heaven! So much greater kingdom; so much more glorious kingdom; so much more enduring kingdom — the Kingdom of the heavens! That is good news, to herald or proclaim that there is another Kingdom to be given to those who have been stripped of everything here, in which their life and their hopes were centred. There is another Kingdom. "*The Spirit hath anointed me*", to say that — the good news of the herald; it is the good news of a kingdom offered, far transcending the highest glory and the fullest wealth of the old earthly kingdom of Israel. You probably know how much these Gospels in the New Testament have about the Kingdom of heaven. You might say that, in one sense, they are mainly about the Kingdom of heaven. It is offered to those who have lost everything here of this world's kingdom.

The second thing that the herald announces or proclaims, is the year of Jubilee. That is not stated in those words exactly, but to anyone who cares to look into it, they will find that that is in the thought, and what lies behind the words here. It is the year of grace, here translated, 'the acceptable year of the Lord' — it is the Year of Grace! of the Lord. And that particular year of the Jewish history, the seventieth year, was the year of Jubilee. During all that period, up to the seventieth year, the Year of Jubilee, if anybody got into debt, for instance, well, their house could be taken in lieu of payment, or their property, or their sons, or themselves. Anything they had and even themselves, could legally be taken, put against their debt. Then there were all those who were in bondage, in slavery, in servitude, over against the indebtedness of either a family or a business, or anything else. But there was a law made by God, in Israel, that the fiftieth year was the year when all debts had to be cancelled; all such confiscated properties, or people, had to be released; and all that had been, during that time, taken in lieu of payment, was to be given back. And early, with the dawn of the first day of the fiftieth year, the trumpet of jubilee sounded forth over the land, and every slave was set free! And every one who was holding anything or anybody, had to return it or them. It was the year of jubilee, the year of grace over against law; that was the historic side of things. Now, Jesus takes that up, and He says: in this new dispensation, not one year, but the whole dispensation, is the dispensation of grace! With Me is the trumpet of Jubilee, which will run right on to the end of the age; with Me is the herald, the announcement. I am the One who sounds

the trumpet of Jubilee, and all the slaves must be released; and all that is in bondage, must be let go; and all that has been forfeit must be restored. Your inheritance, your rights, are returned in the Year of Grace!

Now, you see, that is capable of a lot of time being taken, but I think it is quite simple, and quite clear, there is no doubt about it, that what was true in Israel literally, and historically, is quite true of the race of mankind. There is no doubt about it that you and I, by nature, are all in bondage. We are all slaves; we have all, as Paul puts it, "*been sold under sin*". And we have lost our inheritance. Adam forfeited our inheritance and we lost everything that God meant us to have, by Adam's sin, we have lost it all. Wonderful liberty, the wonderful inheritance has all gone. And we are in a state of lost good and spiritual bondage. The Great Herald has come to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord — the Year of Grace. That is, the year of release and of restoration — the year of jubilee. That is what this Servant does; and that is the herald-ministry that is committed to us. And as servant of the Lord, as heralds, by the Holy Spirit, we can proclaim this. All that you have lost in Adam is restored in Christ; all the bondage in which you are serving, and labouring, in sin, and to Satan, is cancelled out in Christ, and your liberty is offered. The Year of Jubilee means all is restored that has been lost. But notice, here in Isaiah, the herald proclaims 'the day of vengeance' of our God. Jesus did not go on to that. He stopped with 'the acceptable year', the year of grace, and He did not go further and say: "*and the day of vengeance of our God*". When He reached that point, without saying that, He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and said, "*This day hath this scripture*" — as far as I have read; at the point at which I have stopped; "*is fulfilled in your ears*". And He did not say "*and the day of vengeance ...*". But, when He finished His ministry on this earth, He proclaimed the day of vengeance. Oh, when His message had been given, His life had been lived, His service fulfilled, and they rejected, He said: "*Woe unto you ... Woe unto you ... Woe unto you ...*". He then did proclaim the day of vengeance. But there is a day of grace in which everything is offered in Him; an opportunity is given for receiving all that He offers — your liberty, and your inheritance. But there is a terminal point to that day, when, having refused and rejected, another solemn note comes in: "*and the day of vengeance of our God*". The day of vengeance is not the day of grace — it is the day of grace refused; grace despised. It is true that the people in Christ's own day sinned beyond the day of grace in rejecting Him, and entered upon the day of vengeance of God. For us the day of grace still obtains. You can have all that the Herald offers. But, make no mistake about it, there comes a day when you, with persistent refusal, of grace, will find that you are confronted with the day of vengeance of our God. They are the three things that the herald proclaimed, and that is the first aspect of the servant's ministry.

The second, "*to comfort all that mourn in Zion*". Now, it is quite easy to see what Isaiah meant by that. You take what he meant as illustrative of what Jesus meant in saying that. What did Isaiah mean by 'those who mourn in Zion'? Well, why do you mourn? Mourning relates to a funeral, doesn't it? To death? To a funeral? The people of Zion, in Isaiah's day were mourning the loss of what Zion meant. It was the funeral of the meaning of Zion. Now, Zion was always a typical or symbolic term for the highest glories and blessings of Israel. Theirs were the songs of Zion; theirs were the journeys to Zion; they held Zion as the symbolic embodiment of all the divine blessing, and all the divine presence. Oh, Zion, in its great days, was the place of the glory. The glory was there. And now, the glory has gone from Zion. All that Zion meant of ascendancy and victory has gone, because, you know, Zion came in with a victory. It was when it was considered to be so impregnable, that the original holders just manned it with their lame and their blind, and said: Why, our poorest stuff can beat anybody that tries to take this! Then, David challenged his warriors, and said: the one who takes the stronghold of Zion shall be made my Field-Marshal. And Joab took it — he did it! And from that time it became the City of the Great King; it became the centre of the nation, symbolic of the great victory over the impregnable place. All that made Zion a very glorious thing for Israel, and we could say very much about it. But it has all gone! The victory has gone; the glory

had gone; and they are mourning over its loss, and over its condition. What could the Lord Jesus mean so many centuries afterwards, taking up these words, and saying: *Today*; today is this fulfilled; Zion is restored today! Zion's glory is restored to you today. All that is offered to you back again, *today*! It is mysterious.

Well, of course, our letter to the Hebrews gives us the answer: "*Ye are not come to Mount Zion (Sinai) but ye are come to Zion, the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.*" There is a Zion, a heavenly Zion, a heavenly city and a heavenly citizenship, which is glorious above any earthly city of Zion; which is mighty and impregnable beyond the strength of anything that Israel knew; that is an enduring city which will never pass. You are offered the citizenship of a heavenly Zion; you are offered that today. And some of you know how much Scripture of the New Testament we could draw in on that. "*Our citizenship*", says Paul, "*is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God*". "*Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for a saviour, Jesus Christ*". Today this is fulfilled. By new birth from above — birth from heaven by this same Holy Spirit, there is given to you not only the citizenship, but the franchise of heaven — all the rights of heaven are offered to you today, in the good news of the Gospel. "*To comfort all that mourn in Zion*". Is that a comfort to you? Well, I think that some of us do rejoice that our names are written in heaven! That they are in the Lamb's book of Life; that we are born from above; that whatever we have or do not have in this world, we have got an eternal city; we belong to the New Jerusalem. And it means a lot to us, that our citizenship is in heaven, and our names are written there. Well, I said it is simple; it is the simple message of the Gospel.

Thirdly, the servant is presented in the capacity of a liberator. He is a herald, a comforter and a liberator. "*To proclaim liberty to the captives*", and now you notice, "*the opening of the prison to them that are bound*". The words 'of the prison' are in italics, meaning that they are not in the original text. And there is a marginal note which says, 'the opening of the eyes of them that are bound'. And Luke quotes it like that. It is not clear and apparent in this translation, but in the original languages, both the Hebrew and the Greek, it is quite clear that this relates to eyes. This kind of captivity is a different one from that of the slave of whom we have been speaking. What is here being referred to and spoken about is a captivity of blindness. Now we, this afternoon, were back in chapter 6, and the prophet's commission was: 'Close their eyes' — that is a judgment; 'lest seeing, they perceive'. This judgment of blindness has come. Paul says, 'The god of this age hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving.' This is a captivity, a captivity of darkness, a captivity of blindness, a captivity of closed eyes. And it is a captivity, for they cannot see. You remember in John Bunyan's 'Holy War', that the great enemy in his siege of Man Soul, gave instructions that the 'burgermaster' of the city, Mr. Understanding, should be put in a dark dungeon, where he could not see what was going on, "Having the understanding darkened" is the Scripture. And if you have no sight, no understanding; if you are not able to see the Lord, it is a terrible prison to be in. The commission to the apostle Paul, at his conversion, was, "*To whom I send thee to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*". The two things go together. 'From darkness to light', and 'from the power of Satan unto God', "*That they may receive the inheritance*" — the inheritance of people who have had their eyes opened, who have escaped the trickery of the one who blinds the understanding.

Well, this ministry of the servant, is a liberation from this blindness and darkness. And in another part of Isaiah's prophecy, about the coming of the Lord Jesus, he puts it this way: "*A people who sat in darkness have seen a great light*" — how true that was of the Lord Jesus. And here we are in the good of that. We have seen the light; we have seen a great Light. He has opened our blind eyes, and what a new world we have come into and to possess. It is like that.

The Lord Jesus, as the Servant, truly did this. And He said: Today hath this Scripture been fulfilled. And there were those who got their eyes opened when He was here. And He has been doing it ever since. But this ministry has been transferred to His church. Oh, sadly we have to say that the church has not done it too well. There is not the ministry of eye-opening and revelation that there could be or should be. One of the effects of an anointed people is, that other people come into the light and see. They see! They leap out of their imprisonment of darkness, and are able to say: I see, I see!

Well, let us conclude. The Servant as the great transformer: "*To give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*". What a change in situation, condition and outlook. Why, we could stay long on these things. But there it is; we simply sum it up in one word — the transformation. The word itself carried its own meaning. Passing from one form to another: transform. Here is the one form: mourning, heaviness, no song, nor joy; that is one condition. And the other: the oil of joy for mourning; the garment of praise, the song, for the spirit of heaviness; changed over. Well, it is true of the Gospel. It is true of what the Lord Jesus has done, and is doing. Making this great transformation in lives; taking men and women from this one sad and sorry state of things, and putting them into another, where it is the oil of joy in the place of mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. This is the transforming ministry of the servant — and that is committed to us.

Again, 'Behold My servant'. You want to know what servanthood is, and what real service is, well, that is it. Look at Him, for that is it. Well, may the Lord do two things: bring those who are not in the good of this Good News into it; bring you into the values of this great Servanthood of the Lord Jesus. And then, for those of us who know it, who are in the good of it, may He make us servants of it, much more fruitfully and effectively.

Chapter 6 – The True Vine

We have been led at this time to be occupied with the matter of the servant, and service of the Lord. Our basic fragment is from Isaiah, "*Behold my servant*". That particular phrase is, of course, prophetic, and relates to the Lord Jesus. But what we have been seeing is that He is introduced in a very full way into the prophecies of Isaiah for a reason. In other passages concerning the servant, Israel is the object in view; Israel, Jacob, my servant. That nation was chosen and constituted, and dealt with by God with the specific object of being His servant among the nations, and to the nations, for servanthood. That is, that in Israel should be recovered, established and fulfilled the great law of service, for which the universe was created, to minister to God. Adam forfeited that trust, violated that law, and like the one who tempted and led him so to do, appropriated everything to himself, to seek to make it minister to him. So that, so far as God was concerned, this law of service was turned away and was lost in the world, and in the race. God therefore intervened, to take out of the nations a people for His Name; to recover this lost vocation. And for that He chose Israel. Then Israel failed, and drew everything to itself for its own ends and interests, and so the law of their life which was laid down in Egypt: "*Let my people go that they may serve Me*", was terribly violated, and again the vocation was lost. When that was happening, the prophet Isaiah was raised up, and the very heart of his prophecies was centred upon this coming Servant, in whom, without any fear of failure, again, the divine principle and law of service would be perfected, even in our Lord Jesus, who is introduced in a very full way in these prophecies, as the one to whom attention is drawn: "*Behold my servant, in whom my soul delights.*"

But that is not the end. There is a third aspect, because this servanthood is not intended to be isolated to an individual, although that individual may be God's own Son. The eternal thought was a people, a race, to fulfil that vocation. When He has in preview, in forecast, accomplished all the meaning of this service in the Person of His Son, then He transfers that to a people. And we have the third aspect of the prophecies in a 'remnant' — "*A remnant shall return*". And in that 'remnant' the Lord takes up again the values of this servanthood and says something which is very much akin to what He says about The Servant — "*My peculiar treasure*".

Well, that is the Old Testament, but we know there is also the prophetic, future aspect in the case of The Servant. The Lord Jesus, who took upon Him the form of a servant, came at a time when the nation of Israel was set aside in that capacity, and accomplished this service Himself, and brought in a nation to take the place of the nation who had failed — a nation who would bring forth the fruits thereof — the church, the new Holy Nation, as Peter calls it. But before we are through the New Testament, we find that, in general, this people are in a state of departure. The end, in the first chapters of the last book, we find a people of God, but only nominally so — not actually and positively doing the thing for which the church was raised up. The Lord, as we know, came back on the old principle again of a remnant, and appealed to such as would have an ear to hear, and would make a response, and be for Him the embodiment of this great service and servanthood principle and law, to minister to Him and to His satisfaction. And the Bible closes with a view of such — "*His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see his face.*" That, briefly, then, is a view of what has been occupying us; we have been looking into that, shall we say, at the Great Servant, with a view to understanding more perfectly what this service really means — the nature of it: the law of service as universal in the mind of God; the nature and method of service in Christ and in a people for His Name.

Now, I think I will not go back over all the phases and aspects of that with which we have dealt; we will come to one more of these, and I ask you just to look into the prophecies of Isaiah again, laying down our basic words in chapter 43: "*Behold my*

servant whom I uphold; my chosen in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him." Then will you just look back to chapter 41:8: *"But thou, Israel, My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend"*.

Now, we see in those two passages the model servant, and the people called to be the corporate expression of that servanthood. For our purpose, the particular feature and aspect of this, I turn you back to chapter 5 of Isaiah.

"Let me sing for my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he made a trench about it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a winepress therein. And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, men of Judah, judge, I pray you twixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? Now, go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof and it shall be eaten up; and I will break down the fence thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste. It shall not be pruned nor hoed, there shall come up briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."

Among the various similes of 'the servant of the Lord', in these prophecies, is this one of the vine. Israel as the Lord's servant is here conceived as a vine. And this is not an isolated passage in that connection. It would take too long to read, or even turn to all of them. The national symbol of Israel was the vine; it was inscribed or wrought upon the very gates of Jerusalem, and of the temple. The psalmist, in Psalm 53, said: *"Thou broughtest up a vine out of Egypt"*; the prophet Ezekiel, in chapter 15, speaks about Israel as a vine. We know that the Lord Jesus Himself, on more than one occasion, and in more than one way, spoke of Israel as the vine. And in His own matchless discourse, as probably He led His disciples by way of the temple, and they saw the Gate with the great vine upon it, He said: *"I am the true vine"* — a contrasting statement. We will come back to that again. But this, and more, shows us that Israel was to the Lord in that capacity — the capacity of the Vine. The Lord Jesus took that up, and related it to Himself — to be to God, the Father, the Husbandman all that the Vine was intended to mean. And then, it is passed on to the church. *"I am the Vine; ye are the branches."* I think our subtle mentality, very often, thinks of that as two things. But what would a bare, mere stem mean? You would not call that a vine! The Vine is everything — stem, branches, leaves, fruit, and everything else — it is one whole. So that the very idea and conception of the vine is transferred, or carried into, the church. *"Ye ... ye ..."*.

Well, that is, as I have said, a conception of the servant of the Lord. The servant of the Lord as a vine, whether it be Christ, whether it be Israel, or whether it be the church. And that is what we are going to look at more closely now.

First of all we note the place that it holds with God. There is no mistaking the fact that the Lord laid great store by this 'vine' people. I think that what He said about His Son, His Beloved, 'in whom His soul delighted'; the committing of Himself to Him; is only the attitude He wanted to take, the position that He wanted to hold in relation to His people. He really wanted to be able to say of Israel, and at one time He did: 'My beloved, in whom my soul delights'. There was a time when Israel was a delight to the Lord. At any rate, the Lord had a lot of things like that to say about Israel. In a word, His heart was bound up with that people. 'I will sing to my well beloved a song of his vineyard ...'. It is the song, or the language of endearment — something very precious to the Lord. This 'vine' — servant, as the Word says — 'brought up out of Egypt', or raised up from 'the seed of Abraham, my friend'. It was so chosen and constituted to be for God's pleasure,

in which He should find His delight, in which He could take pleasure; and for God's satisfaction; He should find in it the answer to something that He longed for and desired; and still more, that He should find by it His glory. Just as any exemplary vine would be the real satisfaction, pleasure and glory of the vine-dresser, or, of the owner of the vine. That is the position that the vine holds with God — something very precious and important to Him; related to nothing less than His own glory; that in it, and by it, His glory should be displayed and He should find His glory.

Well, that, of course, embraces a great deal of Scripture — God's thoughts about His people. This is the very first meaning of servanthood, of ministering to the Lord. It is to minister to His pleasure, His satisfaction, His glory. To exist for that, and for no other purpose — what God has in it — that is ministry; what God is to get through it — that is service. And this all means that it has no other purpose in its existence. And it leads us to that, as the second thing. Firstly, what it means to God — the place that it holds to Him. But then, the place that it holds as to itself.

This is no casual illustration or symbolism. God is never casual in the choice of His object of teaching. He knows what He is doing. And when He made the vine the symbol of ministry to Himself, and of real service to Him, He knew exactly why He did so. Because, you see, the vine is exclusively for fruitfulness. That is the thing that the prophet, Ezekiel, points out to the men around Him. In chapter 15 the thing that he is saying to them is this: There is no other use that you can make of a vine but its fruit. He even said this: Can you even make of the stem of a vine, and make a peg to hang anything on? You do not even do that. Someone has said: You don't even make a washing peg or hook out of a vine!! You cannot make anything of it. It is useless for all other, or any other purpose, than fruit. God knew what He meant when He took the vine as the symbol of a servant-people. And if that needs any kind of emphasis and underlining, you have only got to look at The Servant, who said: I am the vine. Did He have any alternatives, any diversions, any secondary interests or uses? No! He had no other things to which He could turn if one failed. He had no diversions in His life. He had nothing but this fruit-bearing for the pleasure and satisfaction and the glory of His Father! Exclusively bound to that one thing! That is the vine; all its energies, and all its interests, are concentrated upon one thing. That is: the Lord having what He wants; that upon which His heart is set; the Lord having His inheritance; the Lord having His rights. And all service which is really service to God, is concentrated in that one thing — the Lord having His rights.

Before we say a word about these *rights* of God, have you grasped this exclusiveness of purpose in existence? Have you got any alternatives? Have you got a second line of life? Have you got diversions? Is your life, though it has to be spread over many things — you have your home to look after; you have your business to attend to; there are obligations in this world. Nevertheless, have you but one motive in living, in doing all, whether it is home, or business, or anything else? One governing motive that gathers up everything, and concentrates everything — the Lord having His rights, the Lord finding His pleasure, satisfaction and glory. That is consecration; that is ministering to the Lord; that is the service of the Lord.

The service of the Lord has come to mean such a lot that very often is not the true principle of service. We talk about 'the servants of the Lord', or 'going into the Lord's work', or 'service'. We have got specific ideas, particular ideas about that. Well, it may express itself in various and in many ways, but the servant of the Lord is not some peculiar person, wearing a certain kind of clothing, and going by a certain kind of title. The servant of the Lord is any man, any woman, put in any place, who seeing to it that God gets what He can have there, and they are concentrated upon that. And you can be as much a servant of the Lord in your business, in your hospital, in your school, in your home, as any man who ever stands behind this desk and preaches the Word. It is the principle and motive and law of service that makes the servant, not the profession, or

anything outward. And the Lord's service is: *God has got to have everything* wherever I am.

So, let this thought and truth transfigure everything for you. You have got some difficult places to be in: places that you would not choose if you had your way, places to which you have got to go. But take this with you: I am going to be there; I am going to be here, as the servant of the Lord. Men may think that I am, or call me, their servant, but I am here as the servant of the Lord whatever it is.

And I have said that it is gathered up into this one idea, that God has His rights. The rights of God are found in the fruit. What are the rights of God? What is the fruit that is to come to Him?

Well, first of all, it has to do, and must have to do with God's nature finding its satisfaction. God has a peculiar constitutional liking for grapes! It is only a way of saying something: that His nature just delights in that fruit! Do you know what I mean? We all have particular fancies, have we not? Our natures go out for certain things. That is the thing that we like; something in our constitution that just responds to that; we find that our very being gets a certain satisfaction, pleasure, gratification, in certain things. Well, that is how it is with God in this matter. His nature is to be satisfied with this fruit. But what is God's nature? Well, Paul gives us the answer in his Galatian letter: "*Now the fruit of the Spirit is love ...*"; "*God is love*". And do you want to know what that is? Because the grammatical form demands that we put it like this. It does not say: 'Now the fruits of the Spirit are ...' and then a whole range of things. It says just one: "*the fruit of the Spirit is love*" — what is that? Joy, longsuffering, meekness, goodness ... self control. That is love. Along its various lines. But all those are various aspects of one thing, the nature of God. The love of God shed abroad in our hearts is the secret of joy; and it is the secret of longsuffering — that is patent. And of everything else. But all these things are expressive of the nature of God. Paul says: "*The fruit of the Spirit*" is found in these things, as manifestations of the one nature of God — LOVE; He does look for that fruit. That fruit is God's right. His nature demands that. His whole constitution must have that for His satisfaction. It begins there in character, in nature, in the work of the Spirit in us, in the work of grace in us. That is firstly the fruit to which God has a right. It is inward, like that. The servant is essentially such a servant, whether it be the individual, or whether it be the church, or whether it be that which represents the church in the inner company. The very service is in the first place, is the service of satisfying God as to His own nature.

It is tragically and grievously true that so many find it possible to be in Christian work who are themselves persistently and habitually a contradiction to the nature of God. And if there is one thing that the Bible thunders against, it is that. That is one of the great consummate factors of the end of the Bible. Those messages to the churches, thunder out on this, that there is that which is a contradiction to the nature of God. And how strong, how almost fierce is the voice of the Spirit where that is true. "*I have this against thee ... Thou hast there that woman Jezebel; them that teach the doctrine of Balaam, which thing I hate*"! Well, so contrary to the nature of God. And if we were to sum up the challenge to those churches, and to the church, and to ourselves, in a word we would say: God is not getting His rights; He is not being ministered to in His very nature, the demands of His very nature. The beginning then, of servanthood or ministry to the Lord, is here, in our character, in our answering to the nature of God. The Lord help us.

But when that is recognised, and we have adjusted to that, these rights of God, this fruit for God, is the satisfaction of God's position in this universe, in this world, in the nations. You see, that was the whole charge laid against Israel. (We are not going to take that up now, because it comes later.) But God had been deposed from His right position. The Lord, the Lord was the only true and rightful lord of this whole creation, and of this people, and of the nations. "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is One God*" — is one God. He has lost that place, not only in the nations, but in His people. They were raised up

particularly to bring God into His place into the nations, as the Only God, the True God; His rights in creation; His rights in Himself, as the Lord were, that He, and He only should be served. "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and Him only shalt thou serve.*" The rights of God to exclusive and utter dominion, lordship, government, centre — His rights! And that is the nature of servanthood. Is it not clear in the case of the Great Servant? What was He here for? Well, you may say that He was here for this and for that. And there are many things that define His mission, but you put them all together, and when you have put them all together, they all meant one thing: God has got to have His rights — rights in creation; rights in redemption; rights in dominion; rights in worship and in service. And The Great Servant was committed to *that*. That is service, that, after facing this question of satisfying God's nature, we are here, the church is here, or any company of the church is here on this earth for this purpose, to see to it that God has His place that is utter; God is supreme, and there is no dividing of allegiance with God. God must have the fruit out of the nations, and in the nations. And that is what the church is here for. We are here, to be in the nations; the church is here, to be in the nations, that God should have His place in the nations. Whatever challenge there may come to any company of God's people in any place, it is not how far they are successful in their service, it is a matter of their standing with both feet there, and saying: Here I am; I am here for God; and my being here is a testimony to the fact that God has supreme rights in this place.

I believe that is exactly what the Lord Jesus meant when He said: "*This Gospel of the Kingdom*" — the rule of God, "*must be preached as a witness in every nation, and then the end shall come*". He did not say that this Gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the nations, and everybody in all the nations must be saved before the coming could take place. He said "*for a witness*". There must be that in the nations, which, by its very presence, witnesses to the very fact that there is a break in the dominion of Satan. It is not universal. We are here for that, dear friends. Where we are, there should be a witness that Satan is not absolute lord; the kingdom of Satan is not absolutely universal; here is a break in it - and I am the break, by testimony! That is why you are there or anywhere. I say again, it may not be that you will have a lot of souls saved, or see a great deal of result of your being there. But you are there — that is the fact! God very often puts people just there, and does not explain along the lines of evidences, and proofs, and pleasure, and satisfaction, why they are there, but they are there! And that is all He wants, very often, to have us there as a witness.

That is ministry! It is a very difficult ministry sometimes. As we pointed out yesterday, Isaiah was there, but the reactions to his presence were very painful to him. There were no signs of any success of his ministry while he was giving it. Jeremiah was there — but he was there. The Lord had His men, and that is what mattered — not the success of their ministry, but the fact that they represented God's rights in the earth.

And then, of course, God's rights are ultimately *His* fulness — that He should be filled with all things. And this is no contradiction of what I have just said, nor taking from it. It may just be that, but nevertheless, this ministry, this service, is related to things coming back to the Lord — what we have before called, 'a return movement to God'. For that is everything taking place. For you see, in the beginning, everything was in God, and then things were taken out of God, diverted from God, and sent out in other directions for other ends; taken away from God. And this mighty movement of God through history has been to turn things back to Himself; a great return movement into God. So that, at last, as it is foreshown, He shall fill all things, and all things shall fill Him; all things will be summed up in Him; He will be the sum of all things, When this great return movement has fulfilled itself. Now, that is just the meaning of worship, as so many of you know. And we are just here for that purpose — to bring everything back to God; to counter that reverse; to break that course of things away from God. Oh, see how it has all been taken away from God! That is the very principle of this world — to take everything for itself. The church is here to bring everything back to Him. When we speak of Christ filling all

things, or 'the fulness of Christ', that is what we mean. It is 'His inheritance in the saints, that He shall be the fulness of all things.' Turning things back to God!

Well, are you in that ministry? Are we in that servanthood? Are we here, in this life, and on this earth, for this one thing — God is going to have everything. It is going to be pulled back to Him; we are going to stand like a rock, in this drift and this current, that rushes away from God, and turn it round, and swing it back to Him. Challenge this thing! That is what the prophets did; that is what the Lord Jesus did, The Great Servant; that is what the church is for. But is it not said that the very church itself has become, to some degree, not a small degree, that which has appropriated to itself, for its own ends, and pleasure, much that belongs to God. Yes, how many there are, in the church, and in what is called 'Christian work', in it for their own satisfaction, for their own reputation; to make a name. And if you interfere with them and their bit of work, you get into trouble; it is themselves after all, in the work. Oh, no, we are not here for ourselves; we are here for God.

Now, I must hurry to the conclusion. We must keep the vine well in the background of our mental conception. The third thing is the discipline essential to this purpose. So much is said about this in relation to the vine, is it not? The Lord Himself spoke about it. "*Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bear more fruit.*" We read from Isaiah: "*What more could be done to my vine than I have done?*" There is a lot of history gathered into that where Israel was concerned, you know — a tremendous amount of history of discipline in that nation. What care God had taken! What application! What devotion! What labour! What pains over that vine. And the history of that people was not always a comfortable history under the hand of God. The Lord did not protect, safeguard, and thus prevent difficulties arising. No, there is a lot crowded into the word 'discipline' or 'purging', 'pruning', if you like. Watch Him, watch the husbandman; what is he doing? Well, He is cutting away a lot. That is, He is reducing things! Quite a bit. He is limiting certain liberties. He is taking away some liberties. There are liberties, you know, that are inimical to value. We rejoice in our liberty in Christ, but I am afraid a lot of people misunderstood that 'liberty in Christ'.

Years ago I used to have a good deal of association with what are called 'modernists', the 'Liberal School of Theology'. I knew them many of them personally and I found among them a real gloating over their position. 'Oh, what a great thing it is to be emancipated from that conservative, narrow School of Biblical interpretation. We no longer are bound by those old-fashioned ideas of the inspiration of the Scripture, and the Deity of Christ, and those things. We have escaped from those limitations, and rejoice in our liberty.' My question is the ultimate one. How much fruit for God has come along that line? How much satisfaction to God has that produced? It is a liberty of its kind, which is not fruitful in this way of God having His rights. No, to the contrary! It is a kind of liberty, but oh, it is not the liberty of Christ. I remember, not so long ago, going to Denmark, finding that they were in the vortex of a great difficulty. A whole group of their once most promising young men, had misinterpreted, or misapprehended the teaching of Galatians, about the 'liberty in Christ', and thrown off all restraint. 'We, in Christ, are free from all law; we are free from the law. Therefore, there is no law against our smoking; we can smoke. There is no law against our going to the theatre; we can go; we are free in Christ'. They had thrown off all those restraints, on this misinterpretation of 'liberty'. It was disastrous to the spiritual life. I am very glad to say that that battle was fought through and was cleared up, and that is all right now, and they are all in the right kind of liberty, which, of course, means the restriction of certain things. There is a great difference, as we have so often said, between liberty and licence.

There is another form of liberty, which equally is not a fruitful form of liberty. You know the Roman church has a liberty. Oh yes, it is this liberty of taking away our own conscience, and making the church and the priest your conscience — 'I need not have any conscience about this at all; my priest will look after that for me; my church will look

after that for me.' And so, very often, you find a terrible contradiction in that system. Well, certainly things are not to the satisfaction of God. But, how they glory in that kind of liberty, don't they? Oh, how good it is to be free ... and what they mean is, conscience. They call it law; they call it narrowness; but what they mean is 'conscience about' this and that — you are free. That is taken over by a system. It does not always work out very fruitfully. You get that sort of thing in the army; when a man goes into the army, the government, the army, take over all responsibility for him. He has no longer any personal responsibility, except to do, from day to day, what he is told. Everything else is taken over for him, and he need not worry a bit; he need not worry whether his family is looked after, or anything like that. Beautiful liberty! but what about character? What about the building up of personal responsibility? That does not come into it. It is a liberty that is inimical to real value. And when those men come out of the army, if they have been in long enough, they don't know what to do. Now they have got to take the whole thing on their own shoulders, and they are not fit for it. They have become unqualified to face life for themselves, and many of them want to get back into the army again, simply because of this matter of responsibility.

There is a discipline about this fruitfulness that is absolutely essential, and that discipline is sometimes the removal of certain liberties; a cutting down; a certain kind of narrowing. God forbid that we should be narrow, though I do not see how anybody can be narrow, who has a right conception of the eternal, universal, vast realities of Christ and His church. You cannot be narrow when you have got a real apprehension of these vast things into which we are called; the greatness of Christ, the greatness of the church — that is not narrow! But there is in this the necessity for shutting us up to the things which matter most, and they are fruit for God.

And so we find in this process of discipline, there is with the Lord an intensification — that is it! '*He purgeth it ...*' — but not that which is bearing no fruit. '*If a branch bear fruit ...*'. Yes, there is fruit; it is not that there is no fruit at all. But that there is fruit is not always what He is most set upon; it is not bulk; it is not measure; it is quality, it is weight, that matters with God; it is what is intrinsic value. And so, when there is fruit, He purgeth that it may bear more fruit. That is, less for better, very often. Not spread over too wide an area, in order to get something more concentric, or more intensive, more rich, more full, more intrinsic. That is a principle with God in His dealings with the vine.

Then, there is no figure, I think, that sets forth the principle of the corporate better, and more than, the Vine. Here indeed, and the suggestion is ludicrous — one grape cannot exist by itself. Well, go into a vinery, and what would you say if you saw there one grape, and over there, another grape, and over there one more grape. You would say: Well, there is something gone wrong here; this is either subnormal or abnormal. This is not the normal life. What is the normal life? A bunch of grapes, closely in touch, in contact, related, together. It is a corporate life, is it not? I repeat, I think there is no figure that better shows forth this corporate principle of service. Really, the Lord gets more to His satisfaction through the relatedness of His church in service. You try to be an individual grape — well, you may be a grape, and you might even be a very large one — but there is something abnormal about that; it is not natural, it is not right. The Lord gets far more by fellowship, by relatedness, by oneness, by being together. He has laid down that principle: 'two or three ...'. The corporate principle is His line; He has always worked on that. Get scattered; get divided; and there is something lost. This very service to God requires that we are closely together; we are really bound together; that we are, in a sense, one fruit, one bunch. I just say that because it is a very important thing to notice.

And finally, the intrinsic element of this symbol, the vine, surely is life. It is life, is it not? We know how, in the Word, the fruit of the vine is the symbol of the Blood of Christ. As He takes the cup and the wine, He says: "*This is My blood*" — My Blood shed for you. The two things go together: the fruit of the vine, and the Blood, in symbolism. And what is

the Blood, but the very life. So that the intrinsic element in the fruit is that it ministers life. Life is being ministered; there is a virtue; there is an energy — it is that of Life.

Everything has got to be tested by that, for that is the ultimate. You say: What is ministry? What is fruitfulness? What is service and servanthood? Well, it resolves itself into this in the end — how much life you are ministering; how much life others are coming into and deriving by your being there where you are; not how much truth; not even how much light. But, how much life? That when they come, one thing they do sense, whether they understand everything or not, is life — there is life; that is the fruit; that is the real meaning of the vine. But mark you, the fruit of the vine — the wine comes out of the wine press. The wine press — perhaps you know what that means. Yes, the derived values of this service come out of suffering; out of pressure; out of grinding, crushing, breaking and squeezing. We know what that means to some extent, in spiritual terms. It is like that. But remember that that is the way of being able to *give*. This is the fruit for giving. It is to be able to give — that is service. To have something to give, to give for the life of others — that is servanthood.

The Lord write it deep in our hearts. "*He brought a vine out of Egypt.*" "*I am the vine; ye are the branches.*"

Chapter 7 – A New Sharp Threshing Instrument

We have proceeded too far now with the matter that has been brought to us for this time for any kind of review or retrospect, but suffice it to say that what the Lord is saying to us is gathered around the first words of the forty-second chapter of Isaiah:

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; My servant, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him."

The servant of the Lord; the meaning of servanthood and service. A glance back to the chapter before that, chapter 41:8, we see that this divine conception and thought of servanthood, was, in the first place, related to Israel:

"Thou, Israel, my servant; Jacob whom I have chosen; the seed of Abraham my friend."

We have seen that whereas the great thought of ministering to God in the midst of the nations, and unto the nations, was wrapped up with the call of Israel, these prophecies and others, show how lamentably Israel failed, and had to be put on one side as the servant of the Lord. And then, in the prophecy, the Lord brought into full view, the One who would not fail, and who would fulfil all that thought, of ministering to Him. And here He is, in these words of chapter 42. But then we have seen that the Lord has not departed from His first thought and intention, to have all that meaning of servanthood, as now gathered up and set forth in His Son, expressed in a people. We move on to the later prophecies, not only in this book, but in the other prophets, to see that thought and purpose deposited in a remnant. The main nation failed; the Lord secured everything in His Son; and then found for Himself His answer, as in a nation within the nation. We have seen that that is exactly what we have in the New Testament. The church, in general, not answering the Lord's purpose in its calling, to satisfy Him, to minister to Him and His pleasure is failing again. But the Lord moves on, and appeals to the church, and in the church, for a church within the church, for a company not nominal, but actual and true, that very evident truth in the New Testament.

What we are then concerned with is the nature of this kind of service and servanthood that will bring to God that upon which His heart is set; that will satisfy Him in establishing in the universe that law of service, or ministry to God.

Now, I want you to look at just one or two other fragments, to bring us to the one particular matter that will occupy us in this connection. It is in chapter 41 to begin with. We have read the words about Israel in verse 8: *"Israel, my servant"*. Look at verse 15: *"Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth. Thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small; and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan (winnow, ASV) them, and the wind shall carry them away; the whirlwind shall scatter them"*. Now, look at chapter 21, verse 10: *"Oh thou, my threshing ground, and the corn of my floor!"* Turn on to chapter 28, verses 28 and 29: *"Bread corn is ground; for he will not ever be threshing it. And though the wheel of his cart, and his horses scatter it, he doth not grind it. This also cometh from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom."* Here is one more of the number of conceptions of the servant of the Lord in these prophecies of Isaiah.

A New Sharp Threshing Instrument

How many-sided is this service; how its complexion changes. With this note, something strong, something almost terrible comes into the service. The servanthood takes on something very severe. There are other aspects; there is the gentleness; there is the meekness. *"He shall not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. The bruised reed shall he not break; the dimly smoking flax shall he not quench."* That

sounds far removed from "a sharp threshing instrument having teeth". But it is the work of the same servant. It is only another aspect of his business. There is the "goodness and the severity of God"; they are both of God.

Now, before we look at this *"new sharp threshing instrument"*, let us note one very important thing. While I have read those other passages in chapter 21 and 28, coming to this passage in chapter 41, you can observe a transition. It is the transition from being threshed to become yourself the thresher. In the two passages, it is quite clear that Israel was threshed — *"Oh thou my threshing!"* *"The seed corn is bruised ... I will make thee a sharp threshing instrument."* And the point is this, that before we can do any effective work for the Lord, that work must have been done in us. This is a very important, a very vital part of the service of the Lord, to be a sharp threshing instrument, as we shall see. It is something very important to the Lord; He must have it; He must have a ministry that corresponds to this idea of a sharp threshing instrument. But it might be all too easy to assume the business of a sharp threshing instrument, and begin to handle people and situations very roughly. Any such business can only be done by those who themselves have been through the threshing and bruising. It is only safe, and only right that it should be so. And so it was with Israel. What a threshing the Lord did with Israel! What a bruising He gave them, many times, particularly in their history. And I suggest that the remnant that returned from the Exile, knew in their experience what 'being threshed' means! And really bruised! Softened, broken, humbled, and then, used in this tremendously effective way. That may explain a very great deal. The strength, the power, the tremendously searching, effective, ministry of the church can only be done as the result of the church having itself been dealt with in that way.

I have said that this is a ministry that the Lord needs; a service that He requires; and to have it, He must take those whom He will use, through the experience that He is seeking in those to whom He uses them. It is a law of service, however it may be. I suggest that *"a sharp threshing instrument having teeth"* is quite a positive thing; it is an effective thing; there is nothing negative about that. For any individual servant of the Lord to be positive and effective, that servant will go through some seemingly rough handling by the Lord. It is a law of service. It could be a company. The Lord needs companies of people who stand in this servanthood ministry; here and there and there, standing as His servant, whom He upholds, upon whom He makes His Spirit to rest. And such companies, local assemblies, in order that they may be really effective, will go through devastating experiences — make no mistake about it! The sharp threshing instrument carries out a devastating work. The Lord is very practical; He is not theoretical. He makes things very real. So that this, which here in the symbolism, is likened to a machine, is not really a machine; it is a people with a spiritual history — a sentient people, unlike a machine, sensitive, feeling, with a heart, with a soul, with a human nature. And this people, this 'machine' if you like, is a people or a 'machine' with a spiritual history. It has been through it! These people, when they came really to fulfil this ministry, were in the position to say: 'I know what I am talking about; I have been through it; and it has been through me! I am not giving you just a theme and a subject, and a theory and a teaching; I know this thing in my very being: I have been through it'. That is what is here. You dare not come to Isaiah 41:15 *"I will make thee a sharp threshing instrument"*, until you have been to Isaiah 21:10; *"My threshing"*. Do you realise that? As I have said, that sounds very hard. But that may explain quite a lot, may it not — why the Lord deals with us so severely; why He is not going to allow us to be in a false position if we are going to be of any value to Him — why He takes us through it; why we become His threshing, and the 'corn that is bruised'.

Well, having said that, and I trust you have grasped it, and that it may be some help, some explanation of your experience, we can proceed to look at the function of this instrument — that is, what it does, its effect. This ministry; this kind of service, is, in the first place, something that challenges. Get in your mind's eye the threshing instrument advancing towards the standing corn, and as it comes into contact, it is an interrogation;

it is a challenge; it says, in effect: What are you? What have you got? Are you worth anything? It is a challenge. And is there any Christian who will say that such a ministry is unnecessary at such a time, or at any time — the interrogation of profession, of what is standing there in the field, that is occupying the ground — the interrogation of it as to what it is. What are you?

You know, when the Lord gets to work on us, that is the thing which immediately arises: what we are and what we have got. This is only one way of speaking of it. Speaking in general, we can say whenever the Lord begins to bring us under His flail, under His testing, into days of severe trial, the very first thing that is discovered, is what we are, and what we have got. Can you really stand up to this? Have you got something with which to meet this testing? Don't you think that is important that that should be discovered and revealed? It is not the Lord's will that any should be in a false position - a mere profession without possession. And so He needs a ministry; He needs you and me, and He needs companies. Oh, He would that the whole church would be of this kind, as He intended Israel to be, and did intend the church to be. He would have this kind of ministry fulfilled, that, first of all, is ever discovering what there is for God, in profession, in the whole system of things — all that is spread over the earth, standing there and occupying the ground. What is its worth? What is its value? What has it got? What is the truth about it? The Lord has to have a ministry that does that, finds it out.

I heard only last week of somebody who had thought that they were Christian, and having been asked they were Christian, would have said, Yes, they went to church, took communion, read the Bible, went on with the whole Christian form of things. And then came into the home, the circle of some very thoroughgoing Christians. Nothing was said, but here it was. There was something different; this was not just something formal, the Christian system. This was not the nominal state of things; this was real. There was a life with God there. And that person went to her room, and had a bad night, and came down the next morning, and said: Look here, I do not think I am a Christian at all! Really, am I saved? Can you tell me? Of course that opened the door for some very thoroughgoing dealings between the difference in mere profession and nominalism and Christian practises, and *life*, reality, really knowing the Lord. I'm glad to say that that person came clean through into a new place altogether of assurance. But it required, you see, something that really exposed the falsehood, and manifested the real state of things. And that is a ministry that is necessary. The people who have been through it with God, had some very drastic handling by Him, will, among other things, have that effect of being present as His challenge to all unreality; His challenge to all falsehood; His challenge as to what really is there. And it may be that the Lord would do that work, find out things, and challenge someone here. You have gone to church, you have taken communion, you have read the Bible more or less, you may pray sometimes. But the sharp threshing instrument would challenge you today: What really have you got if you were put to the test? What have you got? The whole of Christianity is going to be put to that test. This has begun. Christians all over this world are being challenged by the situation, the threshing instrument is at work; and it is being found out whether they have got the real thing, or whether it is only a profession - it is at work. The day has already begun when this very thing is coming to the whole of the professing church. Let there be no mistake about it.

Well, first of all, then, the threshing instrument challenges, and asks, or confronts with the question: What are you? What have you? And then as it proceeds with its work, it separates; it discriminates. You see what it is doing? There is the chaff; there are the husks; there is that which is apparent on the outside; there is that covering — there it is! And the sharp threshing instrument gets to work to separate between what is merely and only outward, and that which is truly inwards (the grain) to separate them. Yes, it is a great discriminating ministry.

Another prophet, the prophet Jeremiah, whose life and ministry had so much to do with the false, the false in Israel, asked the question in the Name of the Lord, of the people. His question was: What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord of hosts? Chaff! That which is so light, flimsy, superficial, and can be so easily carried away by any draught that blows. It goes with the wind; the light stuff. Oh, I am not trying to make up something. Anyone who has any concern about the state of things today, will feel a poignancy, a pain, over the superficiality, lightness and frivolousness, of a great deal of Christianity. Indeed it seems that some people have laid themselves out to make it so; turned Christianity into having a good time, and the best of both worlds. All their attractions are — come and have a good time! And when you look into it to see what it is, it is all so light, so frivolous, so superficial. I am not exaggerating, and God knows how I hate anything like unnecessary criticism. But the spirit of a prophet (I don't claim to be a prophet) but the spirit of a prophet demands that the ministry of the sharp threshing instrument shall come alongside every other kind of ministry to first challenge, and then to discriminate, to separate between what is true and what is false. The chaff may be a deception. You may go to a wheat-field, where it is all growing and standing up, and take hold of an ear, and when you press it, you find nothing in it, only husks! It is empty! It is a lie! It is a deception. Do you think God is going to be ministered to by that sort of thing? — an outward deception? No, the sharp threshing instrument — a ministry of such character, will always find out whether the thing is true or false. It is a very necessary thing; it is a necessary thing to be done in you and in me — finding out whether there is any deception about our position, any lie in our position — how far it is true. And I say again, God needs a ministry to do this, that will by His mercy make those who are in a false position realise how false their position is, and seek for reality. Chaff! Would you like to live on chaff? How much satisfaction, and growth, would you find in a diet of chaff?

And is it not true that there is very much today in ministry, in Christian life, on which Christians are feeding, which brings no satisfaction; it is empty. It is not ministering to their spiritual building up, strength and constitution. There are far too many Christians who are in spiritual debility, because of the lack of solid food — bread corn. How necessary it is; the Lord must have a ministry that finds out, and discriminates between that which is only chaff, and never builds up, and that which ministers to spiritual stature and full growth.

If we take the Great Servant, the Lord Jesus, that One who did satisfy God, with all the other aspects of His ministry — how true these things were of Him. How challenging He was to the situation in His day. Oh, it was not possible for Him to be anywhere without the state of things being exposed. It was a vital part of His servanthood to challenge. And how thoroughly He did it. Yes, in that respect He was a sharp threshing instrument, having teeth. And how true again it was of Him, that He was all the time discriminating: this is the truth, and that is the falsehood — setting things in their place. We referred to the Vine, Israel, as God's vine. And we read from Isaiah, chapter 5, how the vine had disappointed the husbandman. Then Jesus came in. We have to put a circle around one word: "*I am the true vine*" — the true Vine. This is but a tradition; this is but a profession; this is an empty thing, a pretence. "*I am the true vine*", "*I am the truth*". His presence, as well as His ministry, had that effect of dividing between the false and the true.

The next thing that the sharp threshing instrument does is that it settles destiny. The chaff. Well, you know what was said then the Lord Jesus first came into His ministry: "*He will thoroughly purge his threshing floor. The wheat will He gather into his garner; the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.*" The garner and the fire — two destinies — (and the threshing floor decides and determines that destiny) what the end is going to be. Its positive object, of course, is not to send to the flames. I think that some ministries, especially in past days, have thought that that was the supreme thing to do — to send men to hell, to hold flames before them. Well, it may be necessary to keep in

view the one side of destiny, whatever it means, whatever it means by 'unquenchable fire'. That is the destiny. And the threshing instrument determines that, on the one side. But the positive intention and purpose of this instrument, surely, is to get wheat, and to garner it. That is, to preserve it, to secure it against loss. That is really what it is after. If this sharp threshing instrument had intelligence, it would not come with this attitude: I am going to find out all the chaff and to talk about the chaff; and condemn the chaff. We don't want to be caught in that. We should be an instrument that would say: No, I am here, though there is much chaff Let us always, in ministry, take the positive side, and not the negative. We may have to take account of the negative and deal with it, but what He is really here for is to get the corn, the 'bread-corn'; the real thing. He is after that. "*Not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved*". So said the Great Servant of His coming.

Then, the sharp threshing instrument had as its last and final function, expression of its ministry, a providing for a continuation of the testimony. The last thought is not to put it away in the garner, and shut the door, and leave it there, and that is that. We have got it, and that is all that matters. No, it is sown again. It must be the stuff of further harvest. That is what the Lord is really after — to carry on, perpetuate, and extend the testimony. He is after spiritual increase. But to get it is the sharp, threshing instrument; something very drastic. The continuation of the testimony of Jesus through the ages has ever been in this way. It has never been an easygoing, superficial kind of thing. We know, from the New Testament; we know from John, the apostle in Patmos, that the continuity of the testimony was coming through very drastic handlings of the Lord with the church, Oh, listen to those words to the seven churches again. What is it that the Lord is after? The preserving and the going on of the testimony of Jesus. That is the heart of it all. But, in order that it might be, this sharp threshing instrument of discrimination, of manifestation, of separation, it must do its work in the churches, in the believers, in the whole church. And if the testimony is to be perpetuated, it will be like this. Well, let us take some heart from this, if it sounds a bit disconcerting. The thoroughgoing dealings of the Lord with us are to make things permanent, and to give increase. They are not destructive and limiting in His intention; they are that He might have more and more; it is like that. But having said all that, we must take note of one thing here as we close.

You see Isaiah's context, Isaiah's context of these words about the sharp threshing instrument, beating the mountains and the hills. And if you want to know what that means, I think you will find it in chapter 41, verses 11 and 15. "*Behold all those that are incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded; they that strive with thee shall be as nothing and shall perish. Because I will make thee a sharp threshing instrument having teeth. And you will beat the mountains low ...*". These mountains correspond to those adverse forces; those forces that were against the Lord, and against His purpose and His servants. And in some mysterious way they were going to be broken, and they were going to be given like chaff to the wind through the ministry of this people. They were going to be proved incapable of standing before the Lord. The mountains, the hills, the 'incensed against thee', will not be able to abide if you are a people like this.

Well, again, take one more glance at the Great Servant. What mountains of opposition; what mountains of incensed people against Him! What has He done with them? Jewry was a tremendous mountain against Him, set for His destruction incensed against Him. Oh, how incensed against Him — 'Crucify Him', 'Away with Him, crucify Him'! What has He done with it? He has plucked that mountain up, and cast it into the sea — the sea being the nations, and it sunk in the nations; He has done it!

Well, that sounds hard, but; you know, the Lord must have a ministry that really does overthrow the forces of evil. We shall have more to say about that later, but there it is. But let us close.

A disciplined, purged, separated people, are a great force against everything that is set against God; they mean something to the hostile forces. Well, this is very true of the Lord Jesus, and it is intended to be true of us. I wonder if you can really grasp and appropriate this. The Lord wants a ministry like this today; He needs it; He needs your company, where you are — and I could mention the various places that are represented here — He wants that company there, there and there, to be, among all the other things, of servanthood, a sharp threshing instrument, having teeth, that will challenge all that is around, as to what it has got, and what it is — not by your words, but by what you are. And that will discriminate and separate between falsehood and truth. And it will go on, and you will get into trouble for it, but it has got to be done. It will do all this. The Lord needs such an instrument.

Well, I have not made this up; this is not my conception; I have given you the Scripture. The Lord said to Israel, and Israel failed, and He transferred it to an Israel within Israel. He said it concerning the church. The church is not doing it as a whole, and so He transfers it to the church within the church, and says: 'I have made thee a sharp threshing instrument having teeth.'

The Lord give us all the meekness and humility that is needed to fulfil that ministry.

Chapter 8 – A Sharp Sword and a Polished Heart

Now we come to the last fragment of this contemplation of the Lord's servant and the nature and meaning of the Lord's service.

"Behold, my servant"

Let us read for this last word to the prophecies of Isaiah, chapter 49:1-3:

"Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye peoples, from far: the Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name: and he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me; and he hath made me a polished shaft, in his quiver hath he kept me close: and he said unto me, Thou art my servant; Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

Here, then, is one more, and for this time, the last of this series of conceptions of the servant of the Lord, and His service, *"He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me; and he hath made me a polished shaft, in his quiver hath he kept me close: ... Thou art my servant ..."*.

Now these remaining chapters of this book are not easy to expound, for one reason in particular: there is very little clear definition as to who is in view. It is very difficult, as you move through, to see and recognise to whom the various passages refer. Sometimes it is perfectly clear, as in 52, 53, and 61. There is no doubting there that it is the coming Messiah, the Christ. At other times, it looks to be like Israel, and then you find that, even there, it is not so clear, not so sure. For instance, this very chapter is like that, as you will see. As you go on in the chapter, and you have words like these: *"It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob ..."* — that cannot be Israel raising himself up; *"and to restore the preserved of Israel"* — that cannot be Israel doing it to himself. *"I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles"* — we are more familiar with that, are we not? *"A light to lighten the Gentiles"* — the words of Simeon concerning the Lord Jesus Himself. *"... that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth"*. Well, we are able to identify that One. And yet, in the whole setting, it seems to move from the one to the other. Now, I am not going to attempt to disentangle that, and give you the clear, dividing lines. Indeed, it is not my intention to engage in giving you an exposition of these chapters at all. I just want to get hold of this one conception of the servant of the Lord, be he the original thought of Israel, the whole nation; the Messiah, or the remnant, the whole church or the church within the church. That does not matter so much. The point is: what is this divine conception of the servant and his service, as viewed here? We have said that there are many conceptions of the servant in this book, and we have been looking at a few of them, over the last two days especially. Here is another one.

"He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword ... He hath made me a polished shaft".

A sharp sword ... a polished shaft.

That is what the Lord intends His servant, His servants, and their service, to be. With all the other things that it, and they, may be, this is one of the things. Not the only thing, but it is here, and it is to be taken note of.

A sharp sword ... a polished shaft! And I think we should say that the element associated with those symbols is that of *incisiveness*. A sharp sword and a polished shaft are no neutral things, no indefinite things; they speak of something having an edge and a point — something that registers, and really does have an effect. That is the overall feature of

such things. And, at once, we pass to the service that the church is intended to fulfil for God, and if it fails, the service, that church within the church, that company within the nominal that is the real, and that really does answer to God's thought concerning the service that it will fulfil. It will be present not only in this world, and on this earth, among men, but as in the heavenlies, among other hostile forces, something that registers, cuts in, pierces, something that counts and tells — a sharp sword, a polished shaft.

That is what the Lord intends us to be as His servants. And again, that is what He intends, not only individuals to be, but His church, in representation, in any place. Now, from another standpoint, it is quite right that any company of the Lord's people should be a very loving, happy little fellowship, enjoying Him, and enjoying one another, and going on mildly and very pleasantly, and having a nice time, everybody saying what nice people they are, what a lot of love there is among them, and so on. That is right, but it is only one side. Such fellowships ought to be a *terror* to anything that is evil; a positive menace to the powers of evil, on the earth and in the heavens. They ought to be there as something that stands against all that is against the interests of the Lord, something that tells among men. Now, of course, it is not at all difficult to understand all this when we come away from the general to the particular, and take another look at the Lord Jesus. Well, 'His voice is like the sound of many waters'. It is only another way of saying: There are many aspects of Christ; sometimes it is very gentle, very kind, very compassionate, very understanding, consoling. Sometimes it is reasoning, seeking to reach understanding; gentle argument, as with Nicodemus. But sometimes, the word of His mouth was like a sharp sword; sometimes He was like a polished shaft. And you can see that aspect of His presence here; the point was being felt by the people around Him. And you know that a sharp sword, or a polished shaft, is not a comfortable thing to encounter. And how many of them cringed, shrank, and felt that point, and that cutting and that piercing. Really, you know His crucifixion was very largely because of that; their retaliation, their hatred. He was far too straight, far too clear-cut, far too exposing and piercing for their comfort. He exposed their hypocrisy; He uncovered their falsehood; He showed up their inconsistencies, and tore from them their masks. He was a sharp sword; He was a polished shaft. And He had that effect upon anything that was false and wrong, and contrary to God, however pretentious it was. Yes, that was His effect. And that is one aspect of the servant of the Lord; have no doubt about it. And it will bring things back on us if we are like that. There is a side of things where you must not condone, where you must not compromise, where you must not be gentle; your effect must be incisive. No one can misunderstand a sharp sword, or a polished shaft. And so it is necessary for this aspect of divine service to be present. It may go altogether against your natural temperament; you want to be on good terms with everybody. Well, remember that you may, by that way, just fail to do a piece of work for the Lord. Sometimes we have to put aside our own feelings like that, and be very faithful. For I suggest to you that a sharp sword and a polished shaft are very faithful things. It is speaking the truth, even if it is in love — being faithful. Well, all that that I am saying, and what I could add to it, is this: there is a ministry to the Lord, and from the Lord, which is of this character, and it is clear-cut, incisive, definite, it registers, and it will have no compromise with anything that is untrue, unreal, false or contrary to the Lord. And, after all, our real accountableness is in the realm of spiritual forces, is it not? What we count for is known best among those spiritual intelligences. And oh, how many advantages they get by our weakness, indefiniteness, uncertainty; how much ground they hold because we are not as utter as we should be in the things of God; we are not as positive as we should be. We are wobbling; we are weak; we are uncertain; we are indefinite; we are limping between two opinions, and they are holding the ground. Now, I suggest that these weapons are a contradiction to that sort of thing and they mean that the enemy will lose ground if we are like this. If we are really positive for God; if we are clear-cut for God; if we are sharp as His weapons, and polished as His shafts. Well, that is the real point here.

But then, we have to ask, How can that be? On what ground can that be, because this kind of effectiveness, this telling power, this incisiveness, like everything else, has a

ground, a basis. And our chapter makes that perfectly clear, I don't mean that it is written in the chapter, but the chapter itself marks the point which makes it possible for this one, whoever he is (I think these words themselves refer to the Messiah). You cannot say it unless you have got the same foundation and position. And so chapter 49 of Isaiah's prophecies marks the point at which a long-standing controversy is at an end. The history was this.

Israel, the nation, had lost its position of distinctiveness, by allowing the gods of the nations, their idols and their altars, their obelisks and their asherah to come in. You know all that the prophet had to say about that. The world had come in. And that had raised the great controversy between them and the Lord. Idolatry is a very big word, a very comprehensive term and we need not restrict it to idols of wood and stone that the heathen worship. Idolatry can be almost anything. And we can say of it? Idolatry is *anything* that divides life with God — anything that shares things with the Lord. Well, we will come to that again in a moment. Now, that is what had happened in Israel, and that had raised the big controversy as to who is the Lord. Is the LORD *the* Lord and the only Lord? Are these gods also Lords? That is the big question. The prophets fought that battle. The real battle that they were in was just because of that. They were fighting that whole thing. But Israel persisted; they were wedded to their idols, and they hardened their hearts against the prophets, and at last God said: They are wedded to idols, so let them go to the land where the idols are. And He handed them over to Babylon, to Chaldea, away into captivity for seventy years! And that did it! Those seventy years were purging fires. Idolatry was purged out of Israel, and never again, mark you, from that time to this very day, in our own lifetime, has idolatry had a place among the Jews of that kind. God cut in between them in Babylon, and so far as that kind of idolatry is concerned, that form of idolatry, it was finished. And now this forty-ninth chapter sees the end of that controversy; it is settled. Who is the Lord? The LORD is the Lord. God alone is God. The idols are nothing. So far as the Lord is concerned, He occupies the only place as Lord. And that is the ground of triumphant warfare; that is the basis of this kind of effectiveness.

Now I have broadened that out as a principle: there will be a lot more, of course, that will be said about Israel, presently. But you know that this chapter is the second half of Isaiah's book, which looks beyond the captivity. There is a lot to be done; there are a lot of unsatisfactory conditions; the Lord still has a lot of controversy. But, after the captivity, that one thing was settled.

Now, if this one in chapter 49 is the Messiah, the Servant — "*Thou art my servant*", Israel, the *true* Israel, "*in whom I will be glorified*"; 'I will use you in this way as my salvation to the ends of the earth', and so on. If this is the Messiah, then again, His tremendous effectiveness, His incisiveness, was based upon this utterness for God; it sprung out of their being absolutely no compromise in any direction with anything that was not for God.

Now God has always been against mixture; and mixture has always been the cause and the occasion of defeat where the people of God are concerned. Well, was it not the 'mixed multitude' that came out of Egypt that were the weakness and the undoing of the nation in the wilderness. It says: The mixed multitudes murmured. And we know that in the final summing up, it was that murmuring that set that people aside so that they never were allowed to go into the Land. The apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthians: "*Neither murmur ye as some of them murmured, and fell in the wilderness in one day.*" But it was the 'allied multitude' that murmured: they were the weakness of the whole thing, and the cause of their defeat and subsequent loss. Yes, Israel's mixed multitudes. And this mixture in Israel later, in the later period of their history, to which we are returning, was the cause of their undoing, and their going into Babylon. And even when they came back from Babylon, there was still mixture. And you know how in Ezra and Nehemiah, the great business of those leaders was to deal with this great mixture in

marriage, to get rid of the two things that were not the same thing. They laid themselves out to do, and when that was done, the people were in a strong position.

But let us come to the Great Servant again — the Lord Jesus, it was just this very thing that lay behind His statement: "*The prince of this world cometh to me and hath nothing in Me*". He hath nothing; there is nothing that belongs to him, or relates to him, or is of him, in Me Therefore, the prince of this world is cast out; His victory over the forces of evil was due to His complete purity so far as the kingdom of Satan and all that belonged to it was concerned. That was the battle of the wilderness during the forty days after His baptism. Satan was trying to defile, to corrupt, this One, this Christ, by getting Him to accept this world in its unregenerate state, its unsaved condition as His dominion. "All this will I give thee, if thou wilt bow down and worship me." Why? Why did Jesus refuse it? He is not going to be the king of a corrupt, defiled world. Note, not only then, but always, He is not having it. When they would come and by force, make Him King, what did He do? What a chance! Had He not come for that? Ah, no! When they would by force make Him King, He departed into a desert place! I wish we could handle all our temptations to popularity like that. You see, the statement about Him is so clear, and He is so true to it: "*He would not commit himself unto them, for He knew what was in man.*" And he knew perfectly well the corrupt state of this world and of the crowd; today they would come and make Him king by force, and tomorrow they would say: Crucify Him! That is the world. If the world cannot use you for itself, it will crucify you. That is the kind of world it is, because the spirit of this world is to use you and everything else for itself! It is the principle of the flesh; it is the fallen nature to use everything for itself. It is corrupt. And Jesus is not having that kind of kingdom. In effect He is saying: If I am going to have the kingdoms of this world, and I am, I will have them as redeemed from all iniquity, with the prince of this world cast out on pure ground, on holy ground. And so He hurled the weapon of His mouth — 'the sword of His mouth' — and said: "*It is written: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.*" That is the ground of strength — Him only! That was the trouble with Israel, and brought Israel's downfall, because it was not the Lord only!

Well, the point clearly is this, that strength, incisiveness, effectiveness, victory over evil and evil forces, is upon the basis of an undivided heart, where God is concerned, where He is Lord, and Lord alone.

So, when, in principle, this controversy as to what place the Lord is to hold, and how much of the place the Lord is to have, then it is possible to say: He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; He hath made me a polished shaft, in his quiver hath he hid me. I think you see the principle is just this: there has got to be a place with God where this world has no place; where all that belongs to this world, as Satan's kingdom has no place whatever. But in far more subtle ways than you or I recognise, the enemy is always at work to weaken our fighting force, blunt the edge of God's weapon in us by some kind of worldliness, form of worldliness; for worldliness as a principle; some link with this world; some way of doing things as this world does it; some pandering to some worldly interest; some way in which we use our time and our means. Oh, it takes many, many different forms. This world is wholly inimical to God. It is only as you and I are completely severed from the whole thing, in a spiritual as well as in a practical way, that we shall be a fighting weapon in the hands of our God.

And that is something that the Lord very much needs. For, after all, these symbols represent the belligerent aspect of the service of the Lord. We are in a tremendous battle. We are going to be beaten, defeated, and worsted unless we are on the right ground. And the right ground is the ground that the Lord Jesus was on all the time. No selfish considerations, no personal interests to serve. That is the spirit of the world. Because, after all, 'servant', if rightly understood, means unselfishness. It is not true to the principle of servanthood to be using your position for your own ends. It is a violation of servanthood. The real meaning of a servant is one whose personal interests,

consideration and ends have been completely subjected to the interests of the one to be served. They just live for that One and never consider how it affects them at all. They live for the One to whom they have given themselves as servant. It is entirely and utterly an unselfish thing. And yet that is such a tremendous power as seen in the case of the Lord Jesus.

Unselfishness! What a range that covers! Self-ish-ness! The only way of being delivered from it is that another should have completely captured the heart. Another should have taken the place as self. And that is where the Lord Jesus was. It was another! *"I come — in the roll of the book it is written of me — to do thy will, O God. Thy law is within my heart."* That is the Servant. And again, I say, what a power He was, and has ever been in this world.

It is just the reverse in the world. If you are going to count for anything at all; if you are really going to mean anything, you must be master. You really must assert yourself, you must make your presence felt, you must *be* something. That is the world, and always is the world. The world cannot understand this sort of thing, that you will ever be anything at all if you are nothing! They think you will never be anything at all unless you are something. It sounds strange, but that is just it. It cannot understand this law of the Kingdom of heaven, this law of real spiritual power — the meekness of Christ. But, like it or not, the most potent thing in this universe was the meekness of Christ. You know it; you have heard it a thousand times.

"He emptied Himself, and took upon Himself the form of a bond-slave, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, yea, and the death of the cross. Wherefore ...", for that reason, on that ground, because of that ... *"God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the name above every name, that, in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, things in heaven, things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord"*. Is that power? That power was by way of meekness, self-emptiness, but it is tremendous!

Well, there it is. And all this is gathered round this idea of service; really to count for God in a definite and incisive way; in the midst of all that is inimical to His interests, really to be somebody who just counts for God, or a company that counts for God; about whose registration there is no mistaking at all, and the people who are utterly for the Lord will be like that. *"He will make them like a sharp sword ... a polished shaft."* A polished shaft — that is something that is not rusty and unfit for use, but something in His hand, in His quiver, ready to be used. The Lord make us like that.