



the
Golden
Candlestick

**THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS
OF HIS POWER**

Part 1

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MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD'S POWER

We are much stretched out to Him as we approach these times to know what He would say at this particular time regarding His will, His mind, for His people. In that enquiry which has been going on in our hearts, I have found that a certain strong emphasis had been growing in me up to this time, covering a considerable amount of ground. Then at a certain point with all this arising, the question arose, is there any one fragment of Scripture which could express all this, which embodies it as a whole, and immediately on making the enquiry, the answer came back quite distinctly in a very familiar fragment in Ephesians 1:19: “the exceeding greatness of His power”. That is, as you know, only part of a much longer statement or section of this wonderful prayer of the apostle, truly inspired of God, concerning the church.

“The exceeding greatness of His power”. Everyone who has read these last letters of the apostle Paul knows that by them there is given to us full, comprehensive, consummate, transcendent revelation of God’s mind. In a very real way they answer the question as to what the Bible is all about. You take up the Bible, begin with its first words and the first acts of God, and move on right through and you ask: ‘What is it all about, what does it all mean, what is behind it all?’ The answer, in a very real way, is found in these last letters of the apostle Paul. That is why I say that they are comprehensive and consummate as to the mind of God.

You are also aware that these letters are crowded and crammed with superlatives. It is here that the apostle, a master of language, finds difficult to find words by which to express what he has had revealed to him. He exhausts language. Human words are beggared to give expression to the things which he has seen, and here is just one of those superlative utterances — “the exceeding greatness of His power”. That word, ‘exceeding’, carries with it a double idea, or two ideas, both of degree and of comparison. This power is great. It is very great. It is above all power in its degree. That is the meaning. But in that it is exceeding, there is that which it exceeds. It is a word of comparison and that comparison relates to two realms, that is, it exceeds

all its own previous and other expressions, and it exceeds a very great power that is set against it. This power of God itself has before been expressed at certain times and in various ways very definitely.

Three great manifestations of God's power

The former manifestations of God's power peculiarly and particularly were shown firstly in creation. What power there was in creation, that by a word from Him things should be. We do not dwell upon it, but the creation is an expression of very great power. Then God's power is manifested in the deliverance or emancipation of the Jewish nation from Egypt. We shall dwell upon that, but we mention it here in passing — the very great power that God put forth and manifested in getting that nation out of Egypt. And then thirdly, in the securing, delivering and returning of a remnant from the captivity. What power had to operate in order that that should be accomplished! Here were three great demonstrations or manifestations of God's great power. It was power in itself, in degree.

Power in relation to opposing forces

But then it was power in relation to opposing forces. In creation, chaos, darkness, and all the conditions which obtained indicated right at the beginning of the Bible; what a lot had to be overcome. It is no small thing to bring order out of chaos, chaos like that. To make such a change as took place, there was a lot to be overcome, a lot to be dealt with.

And this great power of God was not only the degree of His power. It was the comparison of His power with all the power that was set against it. In Egypt not only was God's power as such displayed, but look at that which it had to overcome. We shall see that presently. And going on to Babylon, there was something very mighty in existence opposing God and His power which had to be simply brought to nought, made as though it were not, in order to get even a remnant out. Yes, something very great to be overcome.

You see, these were not merely temporal conditions or systems. The chaos, the darkness, the state of things as we have them at the beginning of the Bible was not just something that obtained and existed in itself. Those conditions were the expression of a great spiritual background. There was something behind that. It was not just something in itself. There was something behind it and that something had to be overcome. That is perhaps the more obvious when you come to Egypt and the overthrowing of that power. There was something behind, not only a temporal state and system,

but a mighty spiritual force behind it all. And, as for Babylon, again it was not just one of the world empires as a temporal thing that had to be dealt with. We know quite well that in that great conflict in Babylon, spiritual and heavenly intelligences were engaged. It was behind the scenes that the real overthrowing took place, in the realm of principalities.

Therefore this exceeding great power of God is not just His naked strength. It is seen in its excellence over against other powers. It is comparative.

The greatest manifestation of God's power

But the fourth thing to which the apostle refers in this verse which we have cited is greater than all the former expressions of that power. The word 'exceeding' here just means that. Here we come to something more than any former expression of divine power. It exceeds here. There is something more here than in bringing the creation into being out of its former condition. If that required power, and if there were things to be overcome to bring that about, here is something more than that. Add to that all that took place in Egypt, and if that required an expression and manifestation of divine power, and there were great forces to be overcome there, this is something more than that. This exceeds that. And if the overthrow of Babylon for the deliverance of that remnant required an expression of the power of God, this is something more, not only than each one of those three, but more than the whole three put together. This is the exceeding greatness of His power. I do not know how much that impresses you, but it lays a very good foundation for what God has to say to His people today. I said that Paul found it difficult to express it. He exhausted all the languages and words at his command. Well might I wrestle and be saved from the charge of exaggeration. Oh, you cannot exaggerate the power of God required for the thing that the apostle here is talking about. Here it is beyond anything that has ever been before — “the *exceeding* greatness of His power”. So that the fourth manifestation of His power is greater than every other one, and greater than all the others put together.

The objects related to the expression of God's power

Well, what are the objects related to this expression of His power? In the first instance, a world was the object, a world for God, for God's glory, God's pleasure, God's satisfaction, a world expression of the glory of God, a world to be a kingdom for His Son. That was related to the first expression of His power.

The second, because that world had become a prison instead of a glorious

garden, a people are found to be locked up in it, a people for God, and the second expression of His power relates to an earthly people or nation being delivered from the world.

The third intensifies the second. It is the recovery of that remnant from Babylon, but a new principle is introduced and emphasized. It is the heavenliness of a people for God, that there should be here a people who are a heavenly people, and you know quite well that in Babylon the great governing phrase is ‘the rule of the heavens’, ‘the heavens do rule.’ What for? — To secure a people who are the embodiment of that heavenly rule, by their very existence, by their being back in Jerusalem, they are a vessel of testimony that the heavens do rule in the kingdoms of men, a heavenly people.

But these all point on to something more that is here in the mind and the occupation of the apostle, to the fourth and supreme exercise of God’s power, not something temporal and earthly, but something eternal, heavenly and ultimate, so that in this letter to the Ephesians leading up to the fragment which is engaging our attention, we have this:

“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved: in whom we have our redemption through His blood (you can make an allusion to the illustration or type of Israel’s emancipation from Egypt, redeemed through blood, but this is of something more than Israel, more than an earthly people), the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He made to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence, making known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ” (Eph. 1:4-10).

That goes beyond anything temporal. The fourth and supreme manifestation of God’s power relates to that eternal elect, the securing of that elect — the emancipating of that elect, the getting of that elect to the place and to the condition foreordained.

God’s exceeding power in the extrication of the church

So that the thing that emerges from all this is that the extrication of the church, far from being an easy and simple thing, is a superlative matter with God. The extrication of the church is no easy matter. An extricated elect is the embodiment of nothing less than the exceeding greatness of His power in

the way in which we have spoken of it. It is something more than creation. It is a new creation which in its nature and fulness far transcends the material creation. The church extricated is the embodiment of this far greater power of God than has ever been exercised before. You would not think that, would you, from modern methods, the way men proceed? You would think it a very simple thing to obtain this end. You have only got to get a certain kind of heated atmosphere, work up emotion and such things, and it is all done. It is not! Oh no, it is not. We are all off the line, we are all wrong, we are most grievously mistaken if we are not interpreting this Scripture aright, but what seems to me to be so clear and unmistakable as we have it in Ephesians 1, is this. There is an object called the church, the securing and placing of which calls for an expression of the power of God which is transcendent. Am I wrong? Is that not true? Then what about all sorts of other things which are so easygoing in connection with redemption and salvation? We could mention so much that makes it all so easy; it seems to take out of it anything like this — “the exceeding greatness of His power”. It shall be helped to understand this I am quite sure if and when we proceed to those other examples which are, while true in themselves, yet pointers and figures of this so much greater: the getting of Israel out of Egypt, the getting of the remnant out of Babylon. If we understand aright all that that meant, we are on the way, but only on the way, to understand that this matter of God’s securing His church to its position and right condition is no child’s play, no simple, easy sort of thing.

But let us pause for a moment before we go to the illustration. Look at the nature of this extrication, as the apostle is thinking and speaking of it, this fourth expression of divine power. Here, as you see, the apostle speaks of a resurrection translation. “According to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named” (Eph. 1:19-21) — a resurrection translation. And the apostle says that we are the elect, the church. I do not mean our local fellowship, as people call it, but the church. The apostle is saying that this resurrection ascension or translation is not something literal, where the church is concerned at present, but something spiritual. He is not saying, ‘This is going to be.’ If he had said that, pointing on to some future event, then, of course, our minds would at once think of a literal happening when the church literally will be caught up, taken out of the world, and placed there far above all rule with Christ. But the apostle is not saying that at all. He is saying, ‘This has taken place, He has seated us together’, and therefore it cannot be literal, because we are not

there literally; we are here. It must be something spiritual, and in order to be spiritual, it must be something inward, something that has already taken place inside, and that is the essence and entire meaning of this present new dispensation — everything is inward.

With the first creation it was outward; with the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, it was outward. With the securing of the remnant from Babylon, it was outward, but that is not the nature of this present dispensation. It was then temporal; it is now spiritual. It was then outward, it is now inward, and this is the difference, you see, and the distinction between the manifestations of God's power. It takes far more divine power to make this an inward thing than it does to have any kind of outward, external and temporal miracles. To this the Lord Himself pointed when He said, "And greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father" (John 14:12). I have done things in the temporal world, wine and bread and cripples and blind, but that is only in the temporal realm. There are things which are their counterpart which are transcendently greater. They are the inward and the spiritual, and it is to that very thing that the apostle is referring here in his prayer when he says "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your *heart* enlightened" (Eph. 1:17), and that is something far greater than the eyes of your body. This is the difference, this is the distinction, to have a people in whom, inside of whom, this thing has taken place, this extrication, this emancipation, this getting out from a condition, from a situation, from a prison, from a kingdom, from a power and a great power, to get a people *inwardly* out of that is the greatest thing known in the Bible in relation to the power of God, the making inwardly of a mighty and unmistakable difference where a people is concerned. The whole battle of the ages, drawing out all the resources of wisdom, cunning and power from the prince of this world has been focussed upon this one thing — to destroy the distinctiveness between what is of God and what is not, to destroy the distinctiveness between a people of God and those who are not of God. You know that the Old Testament is just full of that: the concentrated force and wit of the evil powers was to destroy the distinctiveness of Israel. Somehow or other, for some reason or other, whether it is natural or by divine creation, that people were marked as different in their physical features.

I remember hearing a very outstanding Jewish brother who was the creator and founder of the great Palestine exhibitions, a Polish Jew, saying in my presence, that, although the Jews had settled in almost every nation and country of the world, and seemed to have become absorbed for generations in those different nations, he said, 'I personally could tell you a Jew

in any country or nation of this world immediately I saw him, without asking.' He said, 'There is something there that, to the one who knows, is unmistakable'. Now, I thought that was going a very long way. It is quite apparent in some cases, but he was fair-haired, ruddy-complexioned, and, but for certain, what you might call, minor signs, you would never have believed that he was a child of Abraham, but there it is. Now be that as it may, there is something constitutionally and physically about that race that is distinct and unmistakable, and you cannot get away from it. It does not matter how long they live in another nation, so long as they do not intermarry and intermingle blood, there is something that remains quite distinct without their trying to preserve it.

That is only an illustration of what I am getting at. It was that something which God had done to mark them off in every way as a people. As Balaam said, they "shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Numbers 23:9). God marked them off with a distinctiveness and a difference which was unmistakable, and still is. It was that that the prince of this world was always trying to break down in the old dispensation. It was that about which the prophets cried, just that thing lost distinctiveness. But if that was an outward, temporal, physical thing in that dispensation, it is only a pointer. It is pointing on to something that remains in principle and more the abiding thing where God's mind is concerned, to have a people who are different, not outwardly now, but inwardly, a people who are distinct from all others in an inward way. There is something about them that you cannot mistake. They are known in heaven, they are known in hell, and they are known among men.

This great inward difference is a demand for power of no ordinary kind. You know it. You do not need me to raise my voice and shout that at you; you are up against it every day and every moment. Wherever you are, you are aware of it, that this thing of your being by divine operation within, a difference from all who are not in Christ, is the point of all the conflict and all the trouble, is it not? Yes, it is. You see, the supreme work of God's power in this dispensation is to produce a distinctiveness of life and order.

The church is that. Oh, how we have missed the point about the church! What is the church? Well, the very first thing about the church, God's elect, is this, that it is the embodiment of the superlative power of God in terms of a difference of life and nature, a difference in the inward being, a distinctiveness of character. That is the church, and if that is not true at its beginnings and progressively, anything that bears the name of the church is a misnomer. That is not true; that is not the church. But, oh, what this involves! To what depths God has to take us in order to make us know that any change in us is a matter of His superlative power. How He has to exhaust all our resources of

strength to make a difference in ourselves. How He has to bring us to an end of every kind of resource to change our nature, in order to make the slightest difference to us at all. But by that way He does it and shows that His power is greater than ours, greater than any other power known to us, to do this thing. I repeat, the work of God's power is inward to produce a distinctiveness of life, an order of life different from every other order.

I hesitate to go on to take up these great historic examples at this point, these historic examples, which embody the same principles, for whether it be in the first creation or in the exodus or in the return from the captivity, the historic things embody the same abiding principles.

The exodus of Israel from Egypt as an example

Look for a moment at this case of Israel in Egypt and the exodus. It is very interesting, significant and instructive to note why all this in Egypt became necessary. You know what happened. The days of Jacob, the famine, the selling of Joseph down into Egypt, all that Joseph did there, and then the coming of Jacob and his sons into Egypt, and because of the wisdom and resourcefulness of Joseph, the land of Goshen being given to them, here they settled. And they multiplied until they became a great nation, and then it is just recorded as though it were a mere incident in history — “Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph” (Ex. 1:8), and the whole scene changes and from being a comfortable, prosperously settled people in Egypt, they immediately become a mob of slaves, oppressed, cruelly treated, Israel in Egypt under this particular Pharaoh. Was it not of the Lord that they ever went into the land? Was it all wrong after all? No, but so it was. Indeed, it looks very much as though there was something of the Lord in it. Joseph, the reconciliation of the family, the blessing, seems to have the marks of the Lord in it. Yes. Then why this change in the situation if the same Lord is on the throne, who does not change His mind or His attitude, and yet this great change in their fortunes, in their conditions and situation, and then the necessity for this tremendous exercise of divine power to get them out of that place to which it seems the Lord had brought them. What does it all mean?

Well, I think it is very simple. You see, the covenant that God made with Abraham and his seed was not concerning Egypt, it was concerning the land of promise, not Egypt, the heavenly land. Now they had moved from this land, and what had happened? They had forgotten the covenant, they had let go all idea of the covenant, and had settled down there to become a part of this world. This world was made for man and made for us, and we were made for it, but something had happened in this world which demands

that while we are in it and have our feet upon it as our rightful inheritance, we are not of it. And because they had become in it and of it, there arose the necessity of this work of God's mighty power to get them out in relation to a heavenly country. We are there figuratively in this very dispensation, in the dispensation of the Lord's wonderful prayer of John 17:15: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16). They are in it, not of it. You see that come out again in a moment in another connection.

But there is something that has happened in an inward way that is wrong, relating them to a spiritual kingdom of this world, and that gives rise to the necessity for all this mighty work of extrication. This world is not all, even at its best. When God created it and put man in it, He did not intend that to be the end. It was supposed to be connected with heaven, the coming and going of God, related to a higher kingdom. When God has things as He intends to have them at last, this world will be a very beautiful world and a very good place to be in, as good as the land of Goshen, but if you and I are here then, or have anything to do with it, this world will not be all. We shall be a heavenly people; we shall be related to another realm, our life will be derived from another source. But here, you see, they had forsaken the covenant, forgotten, let go the covenant with Abraham and settled down here, and what a business it is to get them out, and the business of getting them out calls for the power of God at work in more than one direction.

It calls for the power of God at work in themselves, and you can see that the process of this emancipation was a process of making them more and more and ever more wanting to get out. Sometimes, you know, the Lord makes us so miserable that we shall be glad to get out, get away, because of the sufferings. How many of you are longing for glory and heaven because of the sufferings here? You would not long for heaven if you did not have the sufferings. It is the story of Israel in Egypt; they never would have entertained the idea of the heavenly country if this other one had not been made intolerable. Something has to be done in us to prepare us for glory, to bring us to God's end.

Then all the suffering, but God is greater than all the suffering. That is what comes out at the end, is it not? Oh, how great the suffering! Sometimes it looked as though they would be destroyed by the suffering or affliction and be wiped out. But God is greater than that. He got them out in spite of it all.

As to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, what a lot of instruction there is bound up with God's works there. I must not stay to follow that through. But are you getting a glimmer? All this has a fuller, higher counterpart where the church

is concerned, calling for the exceeding, the above, the more power than all that to get a truly heavenly people.

I am going to close with a word which I shall have to repeat later as we continue. God was working on the principle of utterness. If you are going to have a kind of easygoing half-and-half Christian life just to get certain benefits and advantages for yourself by being saved, it may not be difficult. But if you are on the way of utterness, you are going to find that this is not quite so easy. It is going to call for God's exceeding great power. The church that is on the principle of utterness is a church which knows the fires and the warfare. There was a point where Pharaoh seemed to be wavering and yielding, and he said: 'You can go, but leave your children and your cattle', but Moses said: 'No, not a hoof, the last fragment, the last hoof and the last one of our cattle, not one bit left.' God is moving on that line, and that requires something more than the kind of Christianity with which we are familiar — to get a people utter according to God's thought.

We can leave it there for the time being, but may God bring to us at this time, this very day, some new sense of the greatness of the thing that He is after, the greatness of His purpose, and the greatness of the power that He is prepared to exercise to realise it, and here it is — the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who — are such fine people, who have so much to commend them, who are such good people and the Lord can look upon us rightly with favour? Not at all — "to us-ward who believe". That is all. All the other may be — our unworthiness, unfitness — and yet it is to us-ward who believe.

POWER IN DELIVERANCE AND RECOVERY

“The exceeding greatness of His power”. We resume where we broke off a little while ago in seeing an example of divine power which was by no means small, but which gives point to this word ‘exceeding’, inasmuch as the connection in Ephesians 1:19 relates to something very much more than the example in the Old Testament, namely the extrication of Israel from Egypt. There we have such an example of mighty power at work which we are going to consider a little more fully now, and may I remind you of the point which we have reached, that in relation to God’s purpose and intention of having a people wholly for Himself. He works on the line of utterness. We reminded ourselves that the final and ultimate point and issue of that great controversy in Egypt was when Pharaoh sought compromise, but the Lord and Moses said, ‘No, not to the point of one hoof of one animal. There shall not remain one contact with that kingdom, even though it be the contact of the foot of a mere animal.’ That is the basis upon which the Spirit of God works, and that is the issue that will arise, and sooner or later that issue will be found in the whole matter of whether the Lord’s people are going to fall short of the intention of their salvation and redemption, or arrive at it. The later point in the history of Israel when that whole nation, with the exception of two men, perished in the wilderness, was the disclosure of the fact that, although every hoof had come out of Egypt, it had not come out of them. It is a very serious matter, this. Tremendous things are involved as to eternal calling and vocation, so that when God works on the line of utterness to extricate a people so thoroughly, it is a terrific thing. We must reread those chapters in Exodus from the point where the Lord sends Moses to the point where He has the people on the other side of the Red Sea. It is nothing less than a terrific thing that we find happening in Egypt through all those judgments and plagues to the last consequences. I repeat that it is no small thing for God to get a people completely extricated from that whole spiritual condition, enthrallment, into which the race has been brought through Adam.

Well, having said that, let us look at it a little more closely. Take a fresh

glance into Egypt at that time, for it was there that this word really had its significance, its point, this word 'exceeding'. There was something of a tremendous power there which had got to be exceeded by the exceeding power of God in that realm. Let us look at several of the factors here.

The religious factor

We must remember, first of all, that there was the religious factor. I use that word in its very widest, broadest sense. Literally or absolutely the word 'religion' means reverence for divine things. I am not using it in that restricted, essential sense. I am using it in the broader sense. It has to do not with just temporal things, but with spiritual things. It has to do with worship in the broadest sense, not necessarily worship of the Lord, but worship, and that was a very big factor, and it always is a very big factor in this great conflict, because man is, no matter how some may deny it, a religious creature, and if he closes his eyes and his mind to God, nevertheless he must have something to worship. There must be something towards which his soul goes out. There must be something which corresponds to this word 'religion'. I do not like referring to it, but even in those great systems that are in the world now which are anti-God, the principle is a religious one. It is a form of worship. That is enough about that. But remember that Satan's real strength is a religious strength, simply because man is a religious creature, and the religious factor in Egypt is a very real one, and a very strong one, and it really did serve the purposes of the enemy very greatly. My point is this: that in this great matter of utter extrication from the kingdom of the prince of this world, it is very often a religious question as much as it is a secular question. Very often the whole religious element comes into it, and it is so often the religious factor which confuses it, which blurs it over, which complicates it. So often people are so sincere, earnest and devout, and that is religion, and it may be Godward, and yet with all their earnestness and sincerity and devotedness, if you touch something in their religious system to which they cling, which means a lot to them in the interests of something more heavenly, you come up against something very strong. Religion can become a tremendously strong obstacle to the heavenly thing, to the purpose of God. I do not want to follow that out, but do not let us think that because we are sincere and very devoted and earnest, that that means that we are right out on God's ground. There may be even in that compromising factors, and there was the religious factor in Egypt which was the very strength of the captivity, the bondage, of this people. It was a religious power that had to be broken, not just a secular power.

The spiritual factor

And further there was the spiritual. The religious related to the people, the Egyptians and their priests. That was their religion. But additional to the religious, there was the spirit. There was that behind it all which was satanic, so that God focussed the whole issue and conflict upon the point of the gods of the Egyptians. “Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments” (Ex. 12:12). That is a spiritual thing. That is the expression of a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of the god of this world, and in this tremendous conflict to get a people completely clear, as the phrase is ultimately when they go into the land — “clean over the Jordan” (Josh. 3:17) to get a people there, you have got to deal with spiritual forces. Religion, yes, but backed up by an intelligence that is even greater than the intelligence of the religious people. They do not realize what is behind their very religion, and how their very religion is in the hands of another kingdom to hold them. There is a spiritual factor.

The psychic factor

And then a third thing that was there was the psychic or psychical. Pharaoh called in the magicians, and the magicians were able to perform the counterpart and imitative acts of Moses, of God. They were not in the same realm; they were psychical, that is, produced by psychic or soul forces. It would take a long time, and I do not know that it would be very profitable, were I to embark upon the matter of showing and giving examples of how the psychical can reproduce what looks exactly like the divine. Suffice it to say that there are depths in our human constitution, depths of psychical powers and forces which are altogether unbelievable, if they are dug into and drawn out and put into forceful exercise. You and I are far more complicated beings than we realise, and if only we liked to project ourselves into certain psychical realms and give ourselves over to that sort of thing, we would be amazed at what we would call the utterly uncanny and unnatural things that can happen. And so the magicians came in with their counterfeits, and it looked for the time being as though they had something comparable to the power of God that they could do as well as He could. They apparently repeated the thing that Moses did. The psychical realm was in operation. It is a hateful thing to talk about, but it has a reason.

We have moved already into a phase and aspect of the dispensation which is intensely psychical, and we are moving up to the day of Antichrist. That will be the culmination of the psychical forces in human nature —

calling down fire from heaven, working miracles, all sorts of things, soul force, terrible, awful, the great deception — “They received not the love of the truth . . . And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie” (2 Thess. 2:10-11). The other version is: “God sendeth them a great delusion”, that they will believe the lie instead of the truth, not because they know it to be a lie — they would never believe it if they knew it to be a lie — but because the lie is so like the truth which they have refused. We have moved into that part of the age, and today over Christianity, as well as over the world, is spreading a tremendous psychic wave. That is, a wave of soul force, to produce and reproduce the things that look like the work of the Spirit of God. A terrible thing to contemplate, but there it is. And to get a people for God on this utter basis there has got to be a dividing between soul and spirit¹ more and more as we go along; clear definition, division and distinction, has got to be made. That is where Satan has his foothold. Yes, not a hoof, but a thousand hooves, in that very realm, and not one contact with his kingdom through our psychical being, our soul life, may remain. That is saying a lot, and many of you may not understand that. If you do not, do not worry about it, but they are statements which are facts, and these facts can be verified today all around us.

The heart of man

There was a fourth factor there: the heart of man. If Pharaoh is a kind of embodiment of that kingdom, and of man, what a revelation of the heart of man! I know the problem that some of you, perhaps, young Bible students, have come up against — God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. He said to Moses “I will harden his (Pharaoh’s) heart” (Ex. 4:21). If God hardens Pharaoh’s heart, then Pharaoh is not responsible — that is the argument. Why should God destroy a man whose heart God Himself has hardened? But remember it was not until Pharaoh had repeatedly hardened his own heart and repudiated God, and said, ‘Who is the Lord, I don’t believe that there is such a person; I don’t believe in Him, I will not have anything to do with Him. Who is the Lord?’ Not until then did the Lord say, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart.” But, altogether apart from that problem, here is the capacity of the human heart for hardness against the Lord. You are amazed — it is plague, plague, plague.

1. Editors’ note: We do not know the phenomena Mr. T. Austin-Sparks is referring to. It must have been practices similar to ‘positive thinking’, ‘visualization’ and manipulative techniques that have penetrated Christianity since the early eighties of last century. They can have stunning results that look like the work of the Holy Spirit but are in fact counterfeit. Mr. Sparks is emphasizing that Christians should recognise the difference.

At the end of the first triad of plagues, there seems to be a shaking. Pharaoh is shaking, and he asks for time, just give me time, give me space to get my breath, and he hardens his heart. And the second triad of plagues, and the magicians reeled in terror. It looks as though something is happening, but they harden up. And a third triad, and what is the consequence? Well, you would say, 'Surely the heart of man will yield, give way, under this; surely the heart of man cannot stand out against all this.' But no, after a third triad of plagues, what happens? Pharaoh says to Moses, "See my face no more; for in the day that thou seest my face thou shalt die" (Ex. 10:28). The door is fully and finally closed. What a revelation of the heart of man, the capacity for hardening.

It is a little out of place at the moment to remind you that it was that very thing that the Lord was seeking to deal with in Israel. His word was: "Today, oh that ye would hear his voice! Harden not your heart." You have, like all your race, a tremendous capacity for hardness of heart and stiffness of neck. That is the heart of man universally, and that heart can resist, no matter what happens.

The point is this. All this is bringing to clear relief a tremendous power, a power in the spiritual realm, a power in the religious realm, a power in the psychical realm, and a power in the human realm. What power! It looks as though nothing can break that power. But the exceeding power did it all. It broke Pharaoh, it broke Pharaoh's priests, it broke Pharaoh's gods, it broke Pharaoh's religion, it broke the psychic imaginations, and it broke the resistance of man's heart. "The exceeding greatness of His power".

God's work to get the church on clear ground

It is only a type and illustration, a shadow, but it does point on to this, does it not? All this is included in a people, a church extricated from Satan's kingdom at every point rests upon such an utter basis, everything broken, and God by His Spirit works to make all that real in the church's inward life. Do you know what He is doing with you now? We are like that. All these things are true of us. Religious in our way naturally, in the spiritual background, influencing, controlling, a strong soul nature — what troubles our souls are to us! And this human heart, oh, what a problem this human heart is! The church that God is going to have means that all those things have been dealt with in the cross of the Lord Jesus, and the Spirit of God gets to work upon that church inwardly to make all that true. You and I are being wrought upon, if we are in the hands of the Lord and if we will let Him work in us, as it was true in an outward way with Israel and Egypt, in an inward way, which

requires the exceeding greatness of His power, something more even than that in Egypt, to do this inside.

Now, I wonder if you see the point. I am not anxious to just go on heap-thing upon thing. We should recognise the point of application. The Lord wants to have a people after this kind. That is where we begin. Such a people is the elect Body of Christ. To be to God what He desires, His Spirit must do this thing in us. Thank God it is not left to us, thank God it is, “the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe”, not something that we have to do. When God gets to work upon us His object is that at no point whatsoever shall Satan have a foothold, shall there be a link, a single hoof link between the church and the kingdom of Satan. That covers a lot of ground.

It covers all our life, it covers us in our inner life. It covers us in our home life, our family life. It covers us in our business life. How scrupulous and meticulous we must be in our business relationships and transactions. We must, in handling temporal things, handle them with this sacred conception, that in handling temporal things, doing our work in the world, it is just possible to give an opening to Satan to destroy the testimony of the Lord, to strike a blow at the great purpose of God in His church. You who handle time, handle time from the standpoint of heaven and eternity. Is it not one of the most shocking things to anybody who has any conscientious integrity to see how men waste other people’s time and take money for it? They are no better in principle than the man who goes with a gun and demands money. It is robbery pure and simple in principle. Beware of how you use time for which you are paid. Beware how you handle money. Well, need I go over all that? You may think that is coming down to a very low level, but no, dear friends. The wiles and the efforts of the enemy just in some, perhaps altogether unconscious way, to bring about a link between the church and his kingdom in order to once again have power over it, to destroy it, these wiles and intrigues are almost unthinkable and inexhaustible.

But here is the point of this letter to the Ephesians. I am not thinking of taking up Ephesians at all. This one fragment was all I wanted, but it is all here: the wiles of the devil, and the call of the apostle to watch unto prayer. This is utterness. There is no room or place for weakness here in our lives, no place for carelessness of any kind because of all this. Well, you see, the Spirit of God works on the line of this utterness in order that there shall not remain one hoof contact with the kingdom of Satan which gives him power.

You must remember that, although we speak about the exceeding greatness of God’s power, God’s power is moral power, and God (don’t misunderstand me) is helpless, being infinitely powerful as He is, when moral ground does not exist. Power works morally, and it will not work apart from a moral

life. It is no use our breaking laws, being careless and compromising on principles, and then going and asking the Lord to work for us. He will not. He will say, 'Put that right, and then I will come in. You have given Satan ground. Take it away, and you will find My power at work.' Be practical.

Well, I did say that this is Israel in Egypt to be got out, and it is a tremendous business, because the thing has got to be so utter. Now, if any of you are saying in your minds, 'That makes the Christian life far too hard, high and complicated. Why can't we just have the simple Christian life?' Well, what I say to you, is this, that if you are not going to be utter, then you are going to come to a standstill. If there is going to be just going so far and no further, then you will find that the enemy just plays with your life, and you have not got power, you do not know the power of God really. There will come a crisis sooner or later, and you will find you have been wasting a lot of time; you have not got very far. You certainly have not got where you could be if only you had been more utter, if only you had taken God's ground of utterness. I will not follow that at the moment.

God's necessary intermediary

Let us look here again at this matter. We must, before we finish, look at Moses, God's necessary intermediary for getting the people out. That is what Moses was. Moses is always known in the Bible as 'Moses, my servant', the servant of the Lord, and so service to the Lord and of the Lord, to be a servant of the Lord, means this and this only — serving the Lord in the ultimate and utter purpose of His heart, serving the Lord in getting a people for God right out, and service, or servanthood, becomes a very much more intense and emphatic thing the further you go. You may be a servant of the Lord in just turning souls to the Lord to believe, but if you are going to lead them further on than that, you will find the whole question of service becomes a very much more acute thing. You meet other things when you are going beyond that. Leave that for a moment. Moses — God's necessary intermediary, necessary vessel.

In the world but not of it

Now, is it not so in keeping with all that we have been seeing of truth here, and a point, that Moses was once in Egypt, *and very much in Egypt*, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, in the very palace of Pharaoh? He was in it up to his eyes, and then by a sovereignty he was got out of it and taken right away to that backside of that desert. Not only was he taken

thoroughly out of Egypt, but Egypt was taken thoroughly out of him. What a tremendous thing! If ever he had any pleasure in Egypt, Egypt was now a horror and a dread. He can never go back. But when God has got him like that, He takes him back, and you have to say of Moses the instrument that he is in, but really he is out. He is out and here he is in. That is a very significant fact. When God is after an instrument to bring about the fulness of His purpose, He has to do something very deep. His power has to work very deeply to get out of us the thing that we have got to deal with. We shall never be able to deal with Egypt if Egypt has got a hand on us or in us. And so God took him right out, and took Egypt right out of him, and then brought him into the position of dealing with this situation. We have no authority whatever, no power at all in this realm, if that power has a place in us, the power of this realm. We are just floored and beaten because Satan can laugh; he has his foothold inside. So Moses is a man who is in the situation, but he is not a part of it.

We could say a lot of things about that, but pre-eminently that means something spiritual where you and I are concerned, something that has been done in us. God has done it in us. The thing of which we were once a part is now a horror to us, and then God puts us in the place of our horror to get other people where He has got us inwardly.

Weakening and emptying

And further, Moses was emptied and weakened and brought very low. ‘I cannot speak; anybody else can speak better than me’: weakened and emptied. Why? Oh, we must borrow from Paul again — “That the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves” (2 Cor. 4:7). “The exceeding greatness of His power” — here we are again — “might be of God, and not of ourselves”. An instrument to be used by God for His full and utter purpose will never be a self-important person or instrument — be it individual or collective — will never be of world importance, will never be able to think anything of itself. It will be empty; it will be weakened. I am not exaggerating when I say that for such purposes as these, and for this inclusive purpose of God, the instrument will come to the place where it tells the Lord straight to His face: ‘You have chosen the wrong man; for work like this, you need something of better calibre than I am, with greater gifts than I have.’ Alright, argue with the Lord, but He will not let you off. “Who hath made man’s mouth?” (Ex. 4:11). ‘Did not I make you as you are, and in making you as you are, is not My sovereign power sufficient to make good all your difficulties?’ I wish we could always talk to ourselves like this and believe it. When you are feeling your utter worthlessness, looking around everywhere

to life, and background and history are saying, There is not one bit in it all that could justify my being in this or that; it is not easy to think about the sovereignty of God just making it so for His own purposes. But there it is — emptied, weakened, broken down, in the sovereignty of God, that the exceeding greatness of His power should be of God and not of ourselves.

I had thought that I would get to the captivity in Babylon with all its extra emphases and features that I can see, but I cannot get very far with that. The return of the remnant from Babylon after the seventy years' captivity was on the same basis of principles, the same factors as were in Moses, but there were extra factors. You read the book of Daniel and those books which contain the record of conditions during that period and at the time of the return and you find most of it, but here I say we have some extra factors. I hurriedly pass over these to leave the thing as complete as possible.

The principle of heavenliness

There is an extra emphasis in this part upon the great principle of heavenliness. We said that earlier. Of course, the principle of heavenliness was there implicit in Israel's getting out of Egypt and becoming representatively or typically a heavenly people, and going to a heavenly country. The principle of heavenliness was really governing. But here it comes in with an extra and new emphasis for the very reason that it is always more difficult to recover something lost than it is to initiate it at the beginning. In the initiation and projecting of a matter, while it does require very great power, if that thing is lost, the recovery of it requires more power. Is that patent? It required tremendous power to bring the church to birth at the beginning. Power was certainly mightily at work in those early days of the church and the apostles. Mighty power was there embodied in the existence of the church at the beginning, but to recover anything like it requires a very great deal more power. We know it; we are in it today. We are always harking back to the book of the Acts, to the beginning, to the day of Pentecost, and all that, and all the apparent longing for that. It requires in the church itself, in the people of God themselves, something far more to recover those conditions. See what you are up against in the matter of recovery. When you have thrown away or let go a heavenly position, it is far more difficult to get it back again than it was to get it at the beginning. It seems that in the beginning it was far more spontaneous. Now, it is an agony, and that comes in here in Babylon. There is a lost testimony, a lost position, which was once held, and if there were nothing else as a strong factor in that, you know there is lost heart, and you lose heart and you lose almost anything and everything.

Here it is. Just look at Jerusalem at this time. Read Nehemiah, for that is the state of things at Jerusalem. What was Nehemiah's plaintive cry? "The wall of Jerusalem ... is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire" (Neh. 1:3). What was the cry of Isaiah? 'Our beautiful and holy house where our fathers worshipped thee is destroyed and trodden underfoot' (Isa. 64:11).

The unity of God's people

The wall of Jerusalem is the type and symbol of the unity of the people. It was one wall joined together. It represented the unity of God's people, one people. The unity was their strength. The strength was in their unity. The wall is a strong wall, but their strength is destroyed because their wall is broken down. That is, their unity has gone. Look at Christianity today. Is not the weakness of Christendom that? Is it not like that spiritually today? The wall is broken down, the unity of God's people is destroyed, it is cast down, it is in ruins. We are deploring it, but there it is, and we not only have to look out on the general state of the divisions by sects, denominations and what not. We know how this creeps in to the closest relationships and fellowships, and all the time the enemy is on this job to destroy the testimony of the oneness of God's people which is their strength against him. It is broken down. To recover that is no human job. That requires the exceeding greatness of His power.

But mark you, the positive side is: "the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe", and it will not be long after you have read that in Ephesians before you come to this — "the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:18). That is a mighty wall, the knowledge-surpassing love of God. Can God do it? Well, it is only God that can do it, but He can do it. He can unite and knit you and me together in such a way that the enemy's power will not destroy it. He can do it. It may be only found in little ways, but here it is. But that is the thing to be faced, and what a heartbreaking situation it is, is it not? No wonder they in Babylon, the majority of them, said, 'No, thanks, I am not tackling that job.'

Authority

"The gates burned with fire." The gates in type in the Old Testament are authority. Judgment in the gates, authority; the councils met in the gates, authority. Look today, and ask the question: 'Where is the church's

authority?’ Does it speak with authority in the world, among the nations? Has it got authority in itself? Well, the answer I think is No. It has lost its authority, it is not speaking with authority. It has no authoritative influence in the nations, in the world. The gates are burned with fire. That is the situation which confronts us; there is no doubt about it.

The glory of God’s presence

The house, our beautiful and holy house wherein our fathers worshipped Thee is destroyed. Well, it is the place of the glory. The glory of the Lord was present in the midst of His people because of the house. God was there in glory. Shall we say that is true of the whole church as we know it today? Again that needs no arguing. So, the glory of the presence of the Lord is not to be found, speaking generally in the church now.

Well, that is the situation. That was the situation that Nehemiah tackled, and that is the situation that the remnant tackled, but to deal with a situation like that wants exceeding great power. Interpret that spiritually in our own time. Exceeding great power. This is in the Bible, and we have got to do one of two things about this. I always think that we are forced to be realists in matters like this, and here is the Bible. It says, and it is either true or throw your Bible away, and say it is nonsense, impossible. There is no other course. It is so utter, so ultimate. Now you see what God would do is to recover in a people these things — a love, relatedness, fellowship, rebuild the wall, a note of authority, definiteness, positiveness. ‘This and this is the mind of the Lord for His people, and this is not to be contradicted’, something that comes with a certitude and positiveness. ‘This is the mind of the Lord for His people to recover.’ Oh, how little there is of that today! Little authority in the preaching, anything used but that. Would to God that in the earth today, then, He had a vessel and a voice that knew with perfect assurance what God is after, what God wants, and say without any hesitation, ‘This is the mind and purpose of God, to have a remnant embodying that, and in whom His glory is found, His presence.’ When you meet them, when you go there, the thing that impresses you is that the Lord is there, you meet the Lord there. But that was the situation, all so contrary to that, which obtained in the exile, and that was the thing that had got to be overcome.

God’s remnant

But that was only one thing. There was also this soul of man. Babylon was a great mighty expression of the soul of man. ‘See this great Babylon that

I have made', said the king. The great image and the orchestra and the bands, the whole thing, a tremendous set-up, man's soul inflated and expressing itself in all its self-importance, superiority, pride and self-sufficiency. There in Babylon was everything that the soul could desire. Your souls would thrive and grow back in Babylon. The world there would offer you everything that you would desire in your soul, and so the vast majority of the people said, 'This is our place; we find what we want here.' It was only a few people who would, on the one hand, sacrifice the whole soul life, deny their souls, lay down their souls, and tackle this spiritual thing which represented God's mind. A big issue, is it not? A remnant said, 'Well, no, that is what God wants and has ever intended, God's thoughts are there; we are for God.' That means the loss of this world, the loss of everything. It means what they found it to mean in Nehemiah's time — ridicule. "What are these feeble Jews doing?" (Neh. 4:2). It means slander, misrepresentation, ostracism, threats and wiles. They had to meet it all, and they might have had Babylon. A people like that, and God is with that people. That is where God is. He is not with the rest². I do not know what happened. I suppose they all died in Babylon. I am wondering what happened in the day when the image was set up and the band started playing, and the king said, "Whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (Dan. 3:15). I wonder what happened to the great multitude? They must have fallen down and worshipped, for we do not read anything about their being destroyed. I will not say that it was so, but you cannot help asking the question if it was only Daniel and his companions who refused to bow down. They are involved. But somewhere there is a hidden remnant, as in the days of Elijah, who will not bow the knee to Baal and God is with them.

Daniel God's intermediary

We finish by looking at Daniel. Here we come again to God's intermediary to get the remnant. It seems as though this whole storm, battle, converged upon Daniel and his three friends. It seemed that it broke upon them. It seems that they broke it. The whole issue of the remnant centred in them, mainly in Daniel. But look again. Here is a man with three companions who is in, but

2. Editors' note: Mr. T. Austin-Sparks is not supporting the idea that some believers hold, that all Christians who do not belong to a particular denomination, but follow what they call 'the New Testament pattern' are part of 'the remnant', and that all other Christians do not belong to 'the remnant' but represent the New Testament counterpart of the Jews who remained in Babylonian exile, nor does he state that God cannot be with believers who are members of a traditional Church or organization, which is evident from Mr. Sparks' appreciation of bishop J.C. Ryle's book on holiness.

not in the same thing again. They are in Babylon, but they are not in Babylon, not a bit of it. Their courage is marvellous. Daniel said to the king: "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another" (Dan. 5:17). 'You keep your honours, we do not want any of them; the dainties of your table, we scoff at them. The Lord will look after us, don't you fear for us.' You see the kind of man, the kind of instrument for this purpose of God. They are faithful to God's thoughts at tremendous cost. Furnaces and lions' dens, which have their spiritual counterparts. Any people who are going to stand for God in this way are going to know furnaces seven times heated. Don't have any doubt about it. If you are going to serve God in this way, you are going to find that there are lions and dens of lions, and you may find them in your Christian circle. You may find that Christianity itself can be like that to you, that it may make things exceedingly hot for you and seek to tear you to pieces. Oh, the affliction of these men, their suffering! But God got His remnant.

It is, I say, but a type, a figure again. It was real, not a myth; it was history, but even so it is a figure of the higher. We today can be in exactly the same position spiritually as Daniel and his three companions were. We are serving the same end as they were serving, but on this higher level of a people *utterly* for God. We will have their experiences; there is no doubt about it. There is no romance about it; these things are very real.

The power of His resurrection

But we come back to the starting-point. You see, we started by pointing this out, that when the apostle Paul used this phrase, "the exceeding greatness of His power", he used it in relation to the church after this kind, and if these other things in history represented an exercise of divine power, and there is no doubt that they did, this thing that God is after now exceeds that, and, thank God, because of the exceeding greatness of His power, it can be done, and it will be done. You and I may come more than once to the place where we feel that the end has been reached, the end of endurance, the end of ability to go on. We have come to the end; this is the shattering. We marvel that that has happened, more than once in our experience, and we are still going on. Now you know what Paul meant when he, at the end of his life, said, "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection" (Phil. 3:10). In the creation of the world, it was the power of His resurrection, out of chaos and darkness and ruin. In the extrication of Israel from Egypt, it was the power of His resurrection from that living tomb. In the deliverance of the remnant from Babylon, it was the power of His resurrection again. Did not Ezekiel say that that is what it would be? Was not his vision of the dry

bones just related to that? “I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves” (Ezek. 37:12). Was it not referring to Babylon, the power of His resurrection? But there is a resurrection which is more than creation at the beginning, more than Israel in Egypt and in Babylon. It is this power of His resurrection working in us so silently and hiddenly. There is the hiding of His power. We are not conscious of this power. That is perhaps our main trouble. We are not conscious of this power, the exceeding great power, and I am feeling nothing but a poor, weak worm. Yes, but you are a worm that is going on in spite of what? Why have you continued, and why do we continue? Not because our hearts continue, our wills continue, our understanding continues, not because we receive any help from the world or from circumstances. Some mysterious hidden thing is happening that we do not feel at all, but it is just happening, and we are just continuing. It is the hiding of His power. It is exceeding great power at work, unfelt but very real. I believe that is the story of the church at the end. The church emerging at the end in glory will just be the embodiment of that, not its own glory, strength, resource, or anything like that, but all contrary to that, but God did it, and what a thing it will be. We will understand then. The exceeding greatness of His power which is to us-ward, who believe.

To be continued.

chapter three

Power Working through Suffering

We are continuing within the compass of that great phrase of the apostle Paul's, "the exceeding greatness of His power". I ask you now to come to the book of Daniel, and take up one phrase which occurs three times.

"At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment went forth, and I am come to tell thee; for thou art greatly beloved (margin, literal Hebrew, 'thou art of the precious things')" (Dan. 9:23).

"And he said unto me, O Daniel, thou man greatly beloved" (Dan. 10:11).

"O man greatly beloved" (Dan. 10:19).

A Man Greatly Beloved

There is nothing, I am quite sure, that we would covet more than that that title might rest upon us, that the Lord might be able so to address us — 'Thou art among the precious things, greatly beloved'. But perhaps we feel that we could never attain to that, mainly because we lack those fine qualities which characterise the man addressed in those words, and Daniel was certainly a man of fine qualities, of unmistakably high character. There are many things about him truly commendable, but if you consider this whole matter, with Daniel and his three companions at the centre of the situation, I think you will come to the conclusion, and rightly so, that the divine approbation was not because of any natural qualities in them. While truly the Lord did take account of certain features about them, they were spiritual features in the main, and not natural.

But more than that, this wonderful way of addressing Daniel went far beyond what the man was himself, even spiritually. It had to do mainly and pre-eminently with the purpose that he was serving. It had to do with the

position in which he stood where the Lord's interests were concerned. He was precious to the Lord because of the very precious thing with which he was related and in which he was serving the Lord. Just a flash of light upon that comes from the end of this whole matter. The issue of Daniel's life, as we have seen, was the return from captivity of a remnant. The last thing said about that remnant in the Old Testament is this - "Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another; and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, even mine own possession, in the day that I make" (Mal. 3:16,17). Another version says, "They shall be my peculiar treasure", My peculiar treasure among the precious things, or the most precious things, and this preciousness of Daniel, this belovedness of Daniel, therefore, had more to do with the particular interests of the Lord being served by him than with himself and his own personal merits. We do not, of course, make light of the grandeur of the man before God and his spiritual qualities, but the words of the Lord to him - "Thou art greatly beloved", "O man greatly beloved" - went beyond the man to his ministry, his ministry to the Lord. That rather widens the scope, does it not, and seems at least to suggest that there is a chance for us.

You may think a great deal of these four men, and you will not be able to think too much of them, but with all that they represent, we must note that what they had was God-given, and the Lord gave to Daniel wisdom above all others, and the Lord gave to the three wisdom and discretion. It was all derived from the Lord, whatever it was in their own personal lives and abilities. But when it comes to serving the Lord in the thing that is at any given time nearest to His own heart, then surely the door is open to us, to all. All that needs to be done is to seek to know and to discover what is nearest to the Lord's heart at any given time. Of all the things that the Lord might desire, what is it that is nearest to His heart, what is the thing which pertains unto this particular time most precious to the Lord? We may spread our service to the Lord over a very wide area and embrace a very great many activities, but there is always something that gets much nearer to the heart of God than the general; there is always the particular. I trust we shall see a little of what that is before we finish. Indeed, I think we ought to have seen it already. The exceeding greatness of His power does relate to a particular object, not only to the church as being brought into existence, but as to its being in the position that God has eternally chosen it to occupy, and in the condition in which He desires to have it. Let us leave that for a moment and work towards it from another standpoint.

A Suffering Instrument

The book of Daniel is most generally regarded as a book of history and prophecy. I suppose for most people you have only got to mention the book of Daniel, and at once their minds conjure up pictures of a great image and world empires represented, and then a lot of very ugly and horrible-looking beasts, and the times of the Gentiles, and so on. The whole thing immediately resolves itself into one of the major documents on historical prophecy. Well, that may all be right; not many people agree as to how it is right, but it may be right. Indeed, it is a book of prophecy. But the truth is that this book can be studied, known, and become even fascinating along the line of prophecy and history without it having the slightest spiritual effect upon those who make it their business to know what it contains. What is not recognised is this, that there has never yet been a fulfilment of prophecy without a suffering instrument, and there never will be. Prophecy does not just happen, even although it has got to happen, it must happen. There has to be a bridge between the prophecy and its fulfilment, which bridge takes the strain and bears the load unto fulfilment. There has to be a mediator which stands in the gap and suffers for the fulfilment of the Word of God. In a word, there has to be a suffering servant somewhere connected with the Word of God. "I John ... was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 1:9) The book of the Revelation is another book that is included in the great prophetic books of the Bible and is studied so often from the standpoint of prophecy being fulfilled or to be fulfilled, and this point is overlooked every time, that this fulfilment seems to be bearing down upon an instrument, a vessel a servant, with a tremendous weight of suffering and conflict. That servant is really fulfilling the prophecy, in effect. That is the greatest truth about the book of Daniel. But for Daniel and his companions, the thing would not have happened. It would not have happened willy-nilly. We have read, "O man greatly beloved ... thou art greatly beloved."

Look at the context. "At the beginning of thy supplications", it came back on that, the answer was given, but there has been set up a terrific conflict in the unseen, of which Daniel knew nothing apart from registering some terrific impact upon his spirit which almost crashed him. The waters almost went over his head. There was something going on because he was standing in the gap — to the fulfilment of what? — the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah. It says so quite definitely (2 Chron. 36:22). There has to be an instrument which enters into the sufferings of Christ for His Body's sake which is the church. That is the principle of it. This whole thing has to be forced, so to speak, through the very heart of one who is in sympathy with

the purpose of God and is suffering with God for that purpose. That may not always be an individual. While it is true that Daniel seems to have borne the major weight of this, it was a nucleus, it was a group, it was a company. It was collective and corporate, and it may be a company that is the vessel that just goes through it for the purpose of God, and if God should find such a people on this earth, that people and everyone comprising that people is peculiarly and particularly precious to the Lord, much beloved.

No Alliance with Satan's Kingdom

There are two sides to the story of Daniel and his friends. There is what we will call the negative side, although it was anything but negative if we think of negative as neutral or passive, but for our purpose we call it the negative, and the positive, or on the one side, the refraining. You notice how the book begins. Daniel and his friends purpose in their hearts that they would not defile themselves with the king's meat, and they besought the chief of the king's eunuchs that they might not be made to partake of the dainties of the king's table and be given very simple fare. Would to God there were more men like the chief of the eunuchs. He said to them, 'You know you are going to bring my head into peril if I accede to your wish. My very life is at stake over this matter with the king. I am running a tremendous risk in taking sides with you in this matter.' However, he did. There are a lot of people who walk in the middle of the road, who compromise, who sit on the fence, whatever simile you like to use, who are afraid of the consequences of taking sides with that which represents God's fullest purpose. They are looking after their own reputation, thinking of how it is going to affect them. But this man, at any rate, came down on the right side, and it would be good if there were more who would run the risk of losing their heads to be on the side of God's fullest purpose.

Now, they purposed, and carried out their purpose, of refusing the king's meat, refraining from eating of his delicacies. That looks like the negative side. Of course, it was very important. The principle was 'lest they should be defiled'. The things themselves were not wrong. The wine is not a wrong thing, it is of God's creating, and the other food was not wrong, but you see it was in a kingdom of idolatry. It was the food of the power and authority of idolatry. Animals to eat were never wrong until they were offered to idols, and then they were. They changed their realm altogether. But it was here that Daniel and his friends drew the line lest they should be defiled. This is a very important thing, a very important principle if we are going to serve the highest interests is, as we have tried to emphasize that there shall not

be a single point at which there is an alliance with the thing that is not of God, but of Satan's setting up. That is the principle. It is not negative by any means. But for our purpose we call it negative: the refraining, the refusing, the withdrawing.

Heavenly Support

There is the positive, the other side, that is, heavenly support. When you take this course, whatever it may mean, and for us today it means a great deal more than what we eat and drink literally and physically. That belongs to that other kingdom with all its glamour, gold, attraction, advancement and reputations to be made, and all the gratification of the soul which can come from this great Babylon. To be with God in His essential supreme purpose opens the door for something very positive, heaven's own support. There was some mystic, hidden power at work in the lives of these men. It is not good enough to say that if a few more people would follow their example and live on a more simple diet, they would be more healthy. That is not good enough. Of course, that has been said about this. 'If only you would adopt a vegetarian diet, live on more simple things and avoid all these luxuries and so on, you would be a much more healthy person.' That is not good enough. There was a hidden power at work from heaven governing this whole thing, that they were not only, because of their refraining from these things, better in flesh and countenance at the end of the time than all the others who were indulging and than they would have been if they had indulged. There is something here of a secret which speaks of a great principle, that heaven will look after those with exceeding power, power that exceeds the power of nature and earthly resources and worldly advantages. Heaven comes in to look after them, that they need not be thin and wasted and miserable and wretched, simply because they are Christians — less happy, less satisfied, than the people of the world are with their world. It is not necessary to be like that, but such Christians can be flourishing, feeding upon the heavenly resources, and be far better off and know it, than those in the world. Heaven places itself on the side of those who place themselves wholly on the side of God's supreme interest. The sustenance and the continuance of these men is nothing less than miraculous — and I do not only refer to their original resolution about eating and drinking. I mean the whole way through their testimony, their sustenance, through the fire seven times heated, through the den of lions, through all the threats and difficulties, the sufferings, trials and adversities and all that had to be overcome, that they came out at the end as they did. And it is perfectly marvellous. You have only got to pick up Daniel

1:21 and you see, “And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.”

What does that mean? He went through three reigns into a fourth: the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, into the reign of Cyrus, in spite of hell’s determination to make a quick end of him and his companions: their sustenance and continuance, heaven supporting and looking after. This is history.

But this can be translated, and, thank God, is translated into spiritual experience. An instrument for God’s fullest purpose, having a people like that means that they are involved in something which is greater even than these physical afflictions of Daniel and his companions. Spiritual trials are always greater than physical trials. Soul agony is always more than physical agony. If our souls are in peace, and our spirits are in strength, how much more we can bear the physical. Well, I think some of you know what I am talking about, what we become involved in if we are related to the Lord for His fullest thoughts and purposes concerning His Son. Oh yes, fires are heated to the seventh degree, lions, yes, lions. Paul knew all about it. “I fought with beasts at Ephesus” (1 Cor. 15:32). We do not know exactly what he meant by that so far as the lions were concerned, whether they were literal lions in the Ephesian arena, or whether it was metaphorical. We do know that he had a terrible fight for Asia in which he despaired of life. Yes, lions, and these sufferings. That is the positive side, that, although that is terribly and awfully true, there is this support, this, may I use the word mystic support, when, if the enemy and the power of Satan and all his emissaries, and the world, and grievous to include, many Christians and the Christian system could have had their way, we would have been finished long ago, for they have not stopped at anything to bring it about. It is true. You are up against something enormous when you stand right into God’s fullest purpose, and yet withal Daniel continued. Heaven is secretly supporting so that you go on, and your going on is nothing less than a miracle. Sometimes the going on seemed to be impossible, but you go on. Survival is wonderful testimony.

That is really what I find to be the valuable thing about the book of Daniel. I am not so interested in the restoration of the Roman Empire. Whether we shall be here to see that or not if it is going to be, while that is of secondary importance, the thing that touches us here is that being with God for all His will and meeting all the opposition that can be thrown against us, God supports us every day. That is the thing that matters, and we survive, but more than survive. You are supported. Is it not wonderful the divine support?

It is real, the marvellous support of God to carry on what is precious to Himself. He does it. It is not because of any capabilities of the instruments

employed. It is heaven. It is the only explanation and answer. What are we after all? When the truth is known, we are where we said in the previous message Moses and Jeremiah were. 'Lord, you have got hold of the wrong instrument.' There is nothing here to justify our being in the position that we are in, and yet God will not let us go. He supports. That is the positive message.

In order to be "beloved of God" did not, and does not, mean exemption from suffering. That is the question that often arises. "O man greatly beloved". How do you know it? There is nothing on the outside to prove it. Daniel thrown into the den of lions, with all that encircling hatred and animosity, and say that inside: there as he is thrown in — "O man greatly beloved". The three in the fiery furnace as they are thrown in, as they are bound to be thrown in, the point of the tremendous threat, and all that that meant, and say, 'Men greatly beloved'. You see the point. To be precious to the Lord, to be greatly beloved of the Lord, because you are serving the Lord in something very near to His heart does not mean that the Lord preserves His most beloved from suffering. We might naturally think that that would follow. "Greatly beloved". Then He will give us a good time, He will protect us, He will safeguard, He will never allow us to suffer in this way or in that. It seems such a contradiction. Loved, greatly beloved, and yet greatly suffering. Well, it depends entirely upon whether the sufferings are related to the purpose of God.

There are sufferings which are the corrective sufferings for our misdemeanours. They are also out of love, related to the Lord's honour and interests, but there are those sufferings which have nothing to do whatever with ourselves. Mark that. There are points where you have to come back to the Lord and say, 'Lord, if I am suffering from sin, why did Christ suffer for my sin? Why did Christ suffer for my sins if I have got to suffer for them?' You can only cut the ground from under the devil's accusing work by that line. And the Lord will say to you, Well, you see, there are two realms of suffering. One is that you have been misbehaving and you have known it and you have persisted although you have known it, and you have had to be corrected. That is My love and faithfulness to you. It is one kind of suffering. But remember there is another whole realm of suffering which has nothing to do with your sin. It is because of your relatedness to My interests, and Satan knows all about it and he afflicts. I could deliver by preventing, but I choose to show the exceeding greatness of My power by keeping, supporting, and bringing you out of all that Satan can do triumphantly at last. "The exceeding greatness of His power". It works through suffering.

Chapter 4 – Power by Revelation

“The exceeding greatness of His power” (Eph. 1:19).

We began these considerations by underlining the word ‘exceeding’, and showing that it is not only a matter of degree, but it is a matter of comparison. It is great, but it is a greatness which exceeds. The power and the expression of that power to which the apostle here refers is different. That is borne out by the immediate context. The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward, the believers, to us-ward, and that again, has the context of the whole letter which stands related to the pre-eminent, supreme purpose of God in this universe, that is, that in this particular dispensation, the supreme object of God’s eternal interest has been brought into being and is in view, and it is concerning that that he used this word ‘us-ward’. He does not just mean himself and a few other fellow-workers, nor does he mean himself and the believers of his own time alone. This letter, as you know, is wholly taken up with and focused upon that elect Body, the church, and so it is in that connection that he uses this word ‘us-ward’. He meant church-ward, the Body-of-Christ-ward, and the exceeding greatness of His power, the power in expression beyond, any other time or in any other realm is related to that. And this statement is not built upon an isolated fragment, because there is so very much more in this very letter itself to support that. There is much more in the whole context of this fragment, this sentence, or part sentence, that bears out the fact that all that the apostle is saying has to do with this particular object, the church, which he calls the elect, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. So it is something comparative, and compared with it, there never has been such an expression of divine power.

A Comparison and Contrast

Having made that emphasis and observation at the commencement, we have since been looking at some examples of divine power in expression from which we have been able to derive some understanding of the working of that power and the principles of its working, and latterly we have been looking into the book of Daniel. There we see divine power most evidently in operation, but the realm of Daniel — I mean the book now, not only the man — is after all the earthly and the Messianic, that is Israel’s earthly hope in person and possession. The book does at points leap beyond that, but it is mainly and essentially connected with an earthly history and an earthly

people. It has to do with the earthly side of God's kingdom. It is God's kingdom, but it is the earthly side of God's kingdom. It is what we call historical. This book is just full of history, but the history of the kingdoms of this world and the relationship with that nation Israel. If in that earthly and more temporal realm there is such a wonderful display of divine power, how much more in this other realm of which Paul is writing, for he is dealing with another and a higher realm and object than this earth and an earthly people or nation.

We ignore for the moment the school of interpretation which rejects all such theories and teachings about the future of the Jews, and claims that all such prophecies about Israel's future are now to be spiritualized and carried over into the church, not arguing whether it is true or not. But supposing that there is to be a resurrection of the Jewish nation, for resurrection it would certainly be, at most and at best it would only be on an earthly level. That is the horizon of that prophetic interpretation which gives Israel as a nation still a future. I am not saying whether you accept that or not. We will not bother about it, it does not matter, but we are saying that, given such a resurrection is to take place, it will never be beyond the earth level.

What Paul is talking about here is something which goes far beyond the earth level. You notice the whole context is the church in the heavenlies. It is the church's eternal calling, vocation, destiny, position, as in the heavenlies and as operating from the heavenlies to the getting behind the whole book of Daniel, behind of the kings and the dominions and the empires to the whole spiritual government and influence of this world. That is an infinitely greater thing than ever Israel as a nation at their very best is ever destined to know. Here is something so much higher, so much greater, and it is in that comparative sense that the apostle used this word "the exceeding greatness of His power which is to us-ward believers". The word 'believers' defines the church, does it not, as a whole? "The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ" — not only raising Him from the dead. That may be true of Israel, it may be true of many others, but "He ... made Him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and he put all things in subjection under His feet." This is something very great. Therefore the power by which this is accomplished is exceeding great power. That is the realm into which you and I, through the grace of God, have been called. That is our calling, that is our destiny that is God's purpose concerning us in this dispensation, and therefore that power is to us-ward because we belong to the dispensation

to which this power relates, and in which this purpose is the object.

The Secret of Daniel's Power

Let us analyse this matter by illustration again from Daniel. That is the first thing, the comparison and the contrast. But what was the secret of Daniel's power and that of his friends? Daniel's power was by way of revelation of times and seasons, of events and things in history. That very largely sums up the book which goes by his name. You notice every time that Daniel came into a place, a position of influence and power and the increase of God's power and ascendancy, it was by way of a revelation. There is something which no one else, though called wise with the wisdom of this world, the wise men of Babylon, something that the wisdom of this world cannot deal with, solve, or explain. It is exhausted and defeated. And then the thing is revealed to Daniel, and it is revealed to his three friends, and more than once this happens, this kind of thing happens, by revelation. It is perceived that in him and in his friends there is a spirit, as it is put, an excellent spirit, the spirit of the gods, able to explain, to interpret. That is the pagan way of explaining it because it does not understand, but this is exactly what happened, and so their influence and power in that realm was by way of revelation, but the revelation related, as I have said, to times and seasons.

We know the prophetic program of the book of Daniel, what would happen during coming centuries. One empire succeeded another, the pageant of empires and a number of other events in the earth, with, as I have said, here and there a glimpse, a break through, of something extra, but dimly, far-off perceived, and imperfectly disclosed. That was power by revelation because, being revelation from God, it carried with it power. Every revelation that comes from God, no matter what the realm is in which it is intended to operate, or to which it applies, carries with it power, enough to overthrow a Babylonian Empire, or a Medo-Persian Empire, or a Greco-Macedonian Empire (as was the case) and a Roman Empire; power by revelation to deal with these mighty systems of this earth. Yes, they are great things, and it is great power at work, and that power is functioning and operating by way of revelation. It is a tremendous thing really to get a revelation from God. If God reveals something, something is going to happen, something bound up with that that all the empires of this world cannot frustrate. Revelation from God can hurl the mightiest edifice to dust and ashes, as was the case here. Well, that is power.

The Secret of the church's Power

But do you see what Paul is saying here in immediate connection with the exceeding greatness of His power? — “That (He) may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him”. There is something bound up with a revelation of Jesus Christ which transcends all other revelations, and has in it power exceeding all other expressions of power. A real Holy Spirit revelation of Jesus Christ is the most momentous thing that can happen in this world and to any life — a revelation of Jesus Christ, a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

There was nothing in all the world that could accomplish a thing like the emancipation of Paul but a revelation of Jesus Christ. Such a man as Saul of Tarsus, steeped, embedded, rooted in the tradition of his fathers, in all the history of the Old Testament and of his people Israel, a personal embodiment of all those oracles and of all that tradition and of all that faith and hope, the hope of Israel, a man like that, who is so convinced to the very last thread of his fabric that Jewry is right, there is nothing more and nothing beyond; for such a man in almost an instant of time to be emancipated from that so that it becomes to him *nothing* in comparison with what he now sees can be alone through revelation. You could imprison that man, you could flog him, you could heap upon him all the ignominies and sufferings that can be, bring every force and power to bear upon him to make him recant Judaism, but a man like this will not be moved one hairsbreadth by anything and everything that you can do to him. But it took only a revelation of Jesus Christ, and it was done. While he never lost his love for his brethren after the flesh, nor his travail for them, he was out of that realm, and strangely enough not only out, but he was sponsoring the very thing for which all Jewry had the most contempt — the Gentiles and their salvation. See what he had to meet from the Jewish leaders because he was standing for the entrance of Gentiles into the kingdom of God. That was where he was. What a tremendous thing a revelation of Jesus Christ was and is.

So we are in something very much greater, are we not? Daniel at most could only faintly prevision the Messiah. The Holy Spirit in this dispensation has the full Christ for our present revelation. I want very strongly to underline that word ‘revelation’, but safeguard it. When I am speaking about revelation of Jesus Christ, do not for one moment think that I am suggesting something extra to the revelation which we have in the Word of God. I do not mean something extra Scriptural, but at the same time I say that to have it here in the book is not everything, and to have the revelation of Jesus Christ only in printed form does not accomplish this thing of which we are speaking. The Spirit of God has got to take this revelation which is in print

in book form, and open the eyes of our hearts that we may see, that we may have knowledge of Him, not as one in the most sacred of books, the most authentic of books, but passing from the written in the book to the revelation in our hearts. When that happens, that is an end of all argument, and that is a mighty thing beyond anything else.

Although many of you have heard things like this before, and so often do suffer the new emphasis, for what is needed, perhaps more than anything else, by Christian people, is not a better knowledge of the text of the Scriptures, the content of the Bible as a book, but a revelation of Jesus Christ in their hearts. It would be altogether impossible to directly handle the difficult situations which concern the Lord today, and His purpose, along that direct line of attack, saying, 'You are all wrong, you have missed the point, everything is topsy-turvy; this is where you are wrong, and this ought not to be, and this ought to be', and all that whole realm of argument, accusation and condemnation. You never get anywhere like that. It is utterly futile and fruitless to attack this present situation in that way. It makes no difference, and if you could get people to change their attitudes, positions and their acceptances, it might after all only resolve itself in another system of truth, teaching and practice. They do it because you overpower their reason, they think therefore that this is the more proper and correct way, but that is not very profitable.

But here is a great situation, impossible of handling along any of these lines. Indeed, if you try, it will break you, it will crush you, for there are people who are as completely and utterly abandoned to their system of things as ever Paul was to Judaism. You have a very bad time if you tackle their pet things. But let there break in a revelation of Jesus Christ, and the thing is done. They are out of that prison, and what is more, they see that it was a prison, and they never before would have believed it was a prison, but they are out. A revelation of Jesus Christ is necessary.

Exceeding power which puts people into a position of real spiritual power is by revelation of Jesus Christ — true, through the Scriptures and not apart from them — but the revelation of Jesus Christ in their own hearts. We know quite well that Paul based the whole of his life upon that very one thing. "It was the good pleasure of God ... to reveal his Son in me" (Gal. 1:15-16), and that revelation, he says, was comparable to what took place in the divine fiat in creation. "God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness ... shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). A divine fiat, and the thing is done. "He spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9). The thing has happened, that is all. A revelation of Jesus Christ is not something

to the mind, it is a happening in the life, and when it has happened, well, it has just happened, and that is all there is to it. Something has happened. And what is needed among the Lord's people today more than anything is that mighty happening by a new revelation of Jesus Christ. That is the working of His power, and it is the secret of power. I trust that before we close today, we shall have come to see something of the meaning of the working of that power where we are concerned.

Inward Revelation

Now again just to underline something already said, but to bring it into stronger relief. Daniel's activities and revelations were by sovereign acts to him. The revelations that he had were things that came from the outside objectively to him. He got his revelations by dreams. Whether a dream is objective or subjective, I am not going to argue, for we understand that it was something that happened to him. It came objectively by dreams and by angel visitants. These were sovereign acts, acts to Daniel. This present dispensation is the dispensation of nothing less than the Holy Spirit of God within believers and the church. Not things objective, but revealed within, "God has shined into our hearts". It is the revelation of Jesus Christ within. We are not moving now on dreams, even though they might be God-given, nor on angel whisperings and speakings, though they might be the angels of the Lord. In this dispensation we are Holy Spirit indwelt. That is the essential nature of the dispensation and of the church. There is a transcendent, an infinite superiority in the very character of this dispensation over all other dispensations. This is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, and this is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit not speaking to, but *revealed within*. Moses wrote on tables of stone, the Holy Spirit writes on tables which are hearts of flesh, says Paul. The new covenant is inward, that is the difference.

Well, that is no new light for you, but this marks something very much in advance upon and superior to all former dispensations, and therefore it marks power beyond anything that ever was before. We know by our very New Testament itself, and what it contains that that is true. There is a power at work by revelation of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit in people that is unmatched anywhere else.

Satan's System a Soul System

Now, note, the system of Satan and this world is a soul system. I hope

you have really recognised what that means. The soul system is a tremendously strong system. We know that in ourselves, the awful times we have with our own souls, our own soul life. That is the system of Satan and this world, the soul system. You see it in Babylon in the days of Daniel and his companions. Oh, how this thing was worked up and played upon, and what tremendous power was exercised by it. Take only one feature — the time when the king set up the great image and called for universal worship of that image. By what means did he proceed to it? — By music. The enemy used emotions to be played upon, to be worked up, the whole thing to be swayed towards this image for worship, by music. Music always affects the senses, but music alone never touches the conscience. I am not saying you cannot sing in the Spirit, and that music cannot be used for spiritual purposes. I am not saying that, but I am saying that Satan's system is a soul system, and therefore that which affects and influences the soul and its senses most is the thing which he employs. That is his line of action. This whole thing is not touching conscience at all, for music never does touch conscience. I am not saying again that God will not touch conscience through words put to music, but music never touches conscience. It only works on senses. That is a great factor in this whole soul kingdom of this world and of Satan's set-up. How much we can say about that, and what a lot Satan has done. I believe that there are few more, if as much, deceptive things to put you in a false position more quickly and more utterly than music. It can make you believe anything or do anything. Why do we have military bands? To make men do anything. Withdraw the band, withdraw the music, and you find the whole thing has gone. I mean that tremendous strength is withdrawn and the whole thing has been artificial. All your good feelings go, all those wonderful emotions disappear, die down, all that you are going to do under that tremendous impulse of the band, of the music, is all a myth, an exploded, burst bubble. What a false realm it is. You can decide to do anything under that emotion, and then you come away from the hot atmosphere of your choruses, of your singing, of your music in which you have been converted, and you wonder in a few days where your conversion is, and if you cannot keep that up, that atmosphere and that kind of occupation, your Christian life begins to fade out. What a deception! What a lie!

You see, here is the working of the lie in Babylon. It is the principle of the whole system of Satan and this world kingdom, and music is a part of it; that is, it is a soul system.

We are in Christ. We are not in a soul system at all. Everything here in

this dispensation so far as the church is concerned is not soul, but spirit. I do not mean that soul is annihilated, that feelings are ruled out and forbidden, but I mean that spirit takes ascendancy and command. It is a thing that you and I need to understand very much more than we do. I do not feel that we can really say too much about this matter for our present time, especially, the false positions into which people are being put because of this drawing upon soul emotions, the destroying of real spiritual life and testimony, because some Christians will sink down into their own souls and live in their own feelings. You can, as I said earlier, produce almost anything by your soul. You can so dwell upon a thing in your soulish mind that you can produce the very symptoms of anything, and the thing itself not be there. If you like to dwell upon some disease and think you have got it, and then let the idea get hold of you, you can produce the very symptoms of that disease. Medical people will bear me out, and the disease is not be there at all, and yet you are feeling that you have got cancer, you have got something. You have been dwelling upon this, your soul has become occupied with it, and now you are getting pains and all sorts of things, and you are certain that is what is the matter with you, and if you will only go and have the thing explored, there is nothing there at all, it is a lie. We have heard of one person, who so concentrated mind and soul upon the death agonies of the Lord Jesus that blood actually began to come out of the veins of that person. You will not believe that sort of thing, but it is true. Get into that realm, and there is no end to it, but it is all so false, such a lie. But what a power it is, what a strength there is in it. You cannot argue people out of it. Even if you produce the evidence by X-ray or something like that, they still do not believe it. What a strength there is in this soul life of ours!

Now a spiritual person is one who has been delivered from that realm, and delivered from that power, and that is the exceeding greatness of His power, and it is for you, dear friend, if you are in the grip of your own miserable, deceiving, lying soul. What a power this is, and it is very true. The apostle has a corresponding phrase: — “strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man” (Eph. 3:16).

Another Comparison and Contrast

I am coming to one other comparison and contrast as I close. Here in Babylon in this great dream of the king interpreted by Daniel, we have this world system, which is Satan’s system represented in a composite person. Take the two words not only together, but separately. Composite person. You

see, it is the figure of one man. But that one man is made up of empires and kingdoms which spread over literally hundreds and into thousands of years, all bits and pieces put together to make up this one man. But how significant that Antichrist is a composite person. What tremendous power there is in Antichrist, in this composite build-up of systems under one personal control, one inward personality drawing together to himself all these parts, and working through them all, the kingdoms of this world. All the kingdoms of this world are one kingdom under Satan's power. They are a composite person. That is how it is in the world; that is how it is in Satan's kingdom.

When you come to this letter to the Ephesians, what have we got? No composite person, but one Person in one organic Body, not bits put together. Oh, let us get rid of this worldly and divisive conception of the church, that it is made up of all sorts of things. The church is made up of Methodists and Baptists and Congregationalists and Jews and Gentiles and Americans and British and Chinese and Indians. That is a lie, is it not? That is composite. It has a lot of power, and it is very useful to the devil, and there is a lot of His power working through that kind of thing. Get up against it and see. You do not meet the Lord. You meet something that is not wholesome, not good. You are up against a terrific power when you touch that composite thing. But how much superior and greater is this Body, the organism, not something put together of all kinds of bits and pieces, but something of organic growth out of Christ, and the picture, the revelation of that church is that it is going to overthrow all this other. This is the stone cut out without hands that smashes the composite. This is it. This is organic. Oh, what power, superior power, there is in organic oneness with Christ! That is only saying in other words, what tremendous power is bound up with the church because it is an organism, the very Body of Christ Himself. And so that is going to emerge when all other systems collapse and dissolve. Yes, it is going to emerge triumphant. Do not again talk or sing about Jews and Gentiles being in the church. There will not be a Jew or a Gentile in the church. There will not be a Britisher or an Indian or an African or a Chinese, or any other nationality, in the church. Do not make any mistake about it. It is a wrong interpretation of "out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9). It does not say 'made up of every tribe, tongue, people and nation', but "out of". If at the beginning He made of one blood every nation (Acts 17:26. A.V.), He has now in the end made one nation from one Blood, His own Blood. There are no nations in the church. It is one nation, and that is the strength of it, that is the thing that Satan fears.

Well, I will not say more, but you surely glimpse something of the exceeding nature of the dispensation in which we live, and therefore of the power which works in this time, and, thank God, it does work. We see something of this in the earth where all these other things of this world system have disappeared, and we can meet forgetful of every kind of artificial distinction and division, whether it be national or any other. It just does not come in, it does not affect, it does not influence, it does not matter. We have found another ground of strength, another ground of life. That other ground is the one new man in Christ.

Chapter 5 – Power Working through Grace

The phrase which has been governing our leading, our consideration, is that in a prayer of the apostle Paul which we have in his letter to the Ephesians, “the exceeding greatness of His power” (Eph. 1:19).

We began by reminding ourselves that at this point in the life of the apostle, that is when he was reaching the end of his journey here, all the full stored up greatness of his apprehension of Christ, the revelation which had come to him of his Lord Jesus, was seeking to burst the vessel and break forth, and it came out in a whole number of superlatives, the words which represent the very extremes of human language. Amongst them there is this one - “the exceeding greatness of His power”. There are others in this letter, and if I am not mistaken, the others are Paul’s own conception of how that exceeding great power works towards us, and so he uses superlatives of the same kind, and sometimes the very same superlative in relation to two other words: grace and love. Love, “the breadth and length and height and depth”, the knowledge-surpassing love. Grace — the riches, the exceeding riches, of His grace, the unsearchable riches of His grace. As you read what comes from this man’s pen, not only here but at other times elsewhere, you are led to this conclusion, that while Paul has such a conception of the magnitude of the power of God, he sees that that is mediated to the church and for the church in terms of grace and love, and I feel that is a good note upon which to conclude this time. So shall we use the little time at our command in contemplating what that means — only contemplating, by no means exhausting.

Christ Above All by the Working of God’s Power

Well, let us return to this basic fragment — “the exceeding greatness of His power”. There are three things connected with that phrase. Firstly, where it put Christ. And so it says, “according to that working of the strength of His might”. Can you find any more words to add to that? — The working, and remember that the Greek word is ‘energio’; it is a very strong word. It is not the passive working, it is a mighty working, it is divine energy, that working, that energy, of “the strength of His might which He wrought — or again, energised — in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come”. Where this exceeding greatness of divine power put Christ.

The second thing is where it puts believers, and the statement is here a corresponding statement, that it puts believers in exactly the same place. "Having made us to sit together with him in the heavenlies in Christ". Exceeding great power is said to put us where it has put him.

The third thing is what it really means, now in this life, for us to have been put there in Christ; to really understand the first, where it has put Him, is to understand the other two. What it means that we have been placed there.

The Apparent Contradiction of Circumstances

Well, let us look into it. Again we must bring together two fragments and this question, what does the combination of these two fragments mean? "The exceeding greatness of His power" in setting Him "far above all". Now is that true, that the Lord Jesus has been put now at this very time far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named? How can you prove it? There is no other way of proving it except by experience. But is it true? Turn your eyes upon that scene in Jerusalem on the day when the vehement ferocity of the Jewish leaders was let loose and vented upon those who bore the Name of the Lord Jesus, and bore down upon that splendid young man Stephen. There seems to be no rein whatever put upon their fury, their malice, but, dragging him out, they take the stones, hurl them until they have broken his body and he is there maimed, bleeding, dying. Is Jesus far above all rule and authority? Presently James will be taken and martyred. Is Jesus far above all rule and authority? Or later, Paul's own life, and that unspeakable wickedness of Nero spreading itself over thousands of believers in the Lord Jesus, covering them with tar and setting them alight as living torches in the light of which they carry out their sports, hurling them to wild beasts, sewn up in the skins of animals that wild beasts should tear them to shreds, and so on and on. Is Jesus far above all rule and authority? And so we could go on right down the years and the history of His followers and servants to our own day. We think of our dear brother who may still be alive, perhaps, in the torture house of the Communists in China, and many like that in China, Russia, Siberia, and other parts of the world, tortured daily because of Him. Unspeakable hatred and wickedness is being expressed towards those dear to the Lord Jesus. Is He far above all rule and authority? Is it true?

God's Purpose in Allowing the Circumstances

Well, where is the answer? The answer is not sufficient as a written thing

in this sacred book. The answer must be found somewhere in practical forms and terms. In another of Paul's letters, that to the Romans, he uses a phrase. It is set in a very comprehensive paragraph at the end of Romans 8. The whole paragraph is this: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we were accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (v. 35-37). This is a man who is not talking theoretically about some possible things that might happen in imagination. This is a man who knew these things actually and literally in his own life, every one of them. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities (far above all principalities), nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers (far above all powers), nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (v. 38-39). Within that comprehensive statement there is just one little clause. We, in all these things, are "more than conquerors", and if you could discern it, right at the heart of that little fragment lies the answer to the question, Is He far above all rule and authority, with all this going on? What is it to be more than conqueror? Surely it is enough to be conqueror. Does it only mean degree, that you not only conquer, but you overwhelm? No, that is not the answer.

I remember some many years ago I tried to illustrate that very clause in this way, and I think I can illustrate it now with something more up to date in the same connection. Quite recently a man in South Africa died who had become very greatly beloved by this country and many others, highly respected, regarded, as a great leader and a worthy man. His name was Smuts. There was a time when, as he was then known, General Smuts was the sworn enemy of this country, and some of us well remember the days of the Boer war, and how Smuts figured in it with his colleague, General Botha. Well, what ravages they wrought, how they nearly brought this proud country to its knees, but then this country won the Boer War. It was a sorry win, but it was a win. They were conquered, but that was not the end. These men were still suffering, smarting in spirit, still enemies, but this country went to work so wisely, so generously, so understandingly in the clearing up of the situation that gradually those men were won right over onto the side of this country. And instead of remaining just conquered, they added their full weight and strength to the benefit of this country. The enemy was not only a conquered enemy, but all his power was brought in the favour of the erstwhile foe, in the favour of the conqueror, and that is being more than conqueror. If you cannot only quench and subdue your enemy, but also take

hold of your enemy and make him serve your ends, that is being more than conqueror, and that is the story here.

We are more than conquerors. How? Why? The very things that have been against us are being used, by divine grace and love, to bring about the things against which they were set. They are fulfilling the very purpose which they set out to frustrate. “I would have you know” said the apostle, “that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel” (Phil. 1:12), and they were pretty hard things. You see, there is the coming in of this exceeding great power through the grace of God, which robs the enemy of His power to do harm, and makes his work do good. That is something transcendent; that is something exceeding great.

The Power of God’s Grace Over Against Sin

And so it is with one great enemy. Is it not wonderful that the apostle uses this very word in that connection? “Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly” (Rom. 5:20). Oh, sin, then — that dark, sinister, evil, destructive thing — has been taken hold of to bring out the greatness of God’s grace. It has not left everything desolate and barren. It has been taken hold of by God as the very ground and occasion for showing how great His grace is. Sin abounded, and, oh, yes, that is a tremendous thing, but grace did exceedingly abound. This exceeding great power coming through grace has brought us to that place, has it not? Is it not something very great to discover the grace of God, the love of God? Oh yes, it is a very great thing to find out the heart of God, and we have found it out by the way in which He has handled sin. Oh, you and I have yet to come into a really adequate apprehension of the grace of God in relation to sin and our sinfulness. You see, here it is in this letter to the Ephesians. Before the apostle gets to this word about the exceeding greatness of His power, he says, “which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved”. The old version says, “made us accepted”. The word ‘accepted’ is ‘freely bestowed’. Accepted, is that not grace? Accepted in the Beloved. There is the heart and wonder of the gospel of the grace of God. We can all believe and understand that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, is beloved of God. That does not want much straining after; there is not much difficulty about that. He certainly is God’s well-beloved Son. He stands before His Father without the suggestion or hint of a doubt or a reservation. His acceptance by the Father is full and utter. There is no shadow between them. They are one in a oneness so utter that there is nothing like it anywhere, and do you see what this says — that that belovedness of the Lord Jesus to the Father is transferred to you and to me. We inherit it in Christ; it is ours. Exactly the

same position held by Him with the Father is given to us. Oh, how can that be? That defeats all our attempts at understanding and explaining. Freely bestowed, accepted in the beloved One, so that what He is to the Father we are in Him. What the Father is to Him, He is to us in Him.

Something has happened. There has been some power at work somewhere to bring that about, seeing what we are by nature and in ourselves, and you tell me that, knowing myself as I do, that is true at this very moment. Then I have misread the Bible if it is not. "Hath made us", is not going to make us, but hath made us. It is already done. He has done something over this question of sin in you and in me. He has done something about it, with all the power that was required to do it. He has exercised that power; it was done in the cross, Oh, wonderful gospel, true beyond our power really to grasp, almost beyond our power to believe. Power working through grace, and it is just grace, and that is all there is about it. Marvellous grace, unspeakable grace, that what the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, is to His Father, I am, you are, in Him. That is something to go out and tell the world, that is the good news, the gospel, of the grace of God.

You have got something to get over to take your place on that, because you are always bringing this self of yours as it is, this sinful self, and there is nothing to say that He has annihilated our sinful selves. I am prepared to believe, if you tell me that there are certain sins that you were once in bondage to from which you are now free, and they no longer go on. But if you tell me that you are no longer capable of doing anything wrong and sinning, I cannot believe you and that is not what is said. If Paul can say "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18), and we cannot differentiate between trespasses and sins, if it says, "having forgiven us all our trespasses" (Col. 2:13), it also says, "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself [consider your own selves] lest you also fall into the same trespass" (Gal. 6:1). That does not look as though the trespassing man, or the man capable of trespassing, sinning, has been annihilated, but being what we are, still capable of sinning, still with a sinful nature, still righteousness unperfected, because Paul almost says with his last breath, "that I may be ... found in Him, not having a righteousness of mine own, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). That is an aspiration right to the end. Righteousness still unperfected, yet this fact that in Christ Jesus we are to the Father as He is. There is power at work in that, and it wants, of course, the whole explanation of His cross to make that clear, but I am stating facts.

Now, you can analyse it, and you can get nearer to it in this way. In order

to understand what has happened, you must recognise and remember the effect of sin; the result of sin. What was the result of sin? In the first place it separated from God. In the next place, it brought condemnation upon man. In the next place it brought death. Well, I will ask you two questions. You are a child of God, you know it, you have been born again. Firstly, Are you sinless, are you incapable of sinning? Do you still have a sinful nature? If you are honest, you will say, Yes, and well you know it. While you are saying, Yes, are you united with God? Have you come to know that you are no longer separated from God, that something has happened by which union has been made between you and God? Is that not your greatest treasure? These two things are true at the same time. Therefore something must have happened as to the effect of sin, and that is exactly what Christ did. He took the effect of sin for you and me in separation from God, and bore all that effect in His own consciousness on the cross and drained it to the last dregs for you and for me in the cup which He drank — separation from God. There is no more separation for you and for me who are by faith in Jesus Christ. The question of our sinful nature continuing is quite another thing altogether, and you will not get anywhere with that until you have settled this, what He has done for you in dealing with the result of sin in the first instance, bringing you to the place from which sin drove you out, union and fellowship with God. Oh, wonder of wonders, that we, still sinful creatures in our own natures, are enjoying fellowship with God. How is it? Well, just for that reason, that this exceeding great power working through grace dealt with that first consequence of sin, and in the same way it dealt with the second. It dealt with the matter of condemnation, and the phrase is almost worn threadbare now: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

That is so in the third matter of death. We come to that in a moment. But you see basically in a matter of relationship, this tremendous thing called sin which brings separation and condemnation and death and has been overcome by the exceeding greatness of His power working through grace, and has brought about our acceptance in the Beloved on the same terms that He enjoys with His Father, wonderful! But we just know a little bit about it in experience. That is more than conquerors, is it not? Of course, we would all be very glad if Adam had never sinned, and we had never inherited a sinful nature, and were quite sinless. I do not want to open up a very difficult discussion, but I really believe that it must be like this, that in the end God will be so wholly vindicated along the line of grace, that we shall no longer have any question as to why He allowed sin, and why He created man, knowing what would happen. The end will be God’s absolute vindication.

There will be no question as to whether He ought, after all, to have created man and allowed sin to come in. God will be vindicated, but He is going to be vindicated by His grace, and there will be more worship and adoration through eternity to God because of grace, than there would have been if grace had never been necessary. That is more than conquerors.

The Power of God's Grace Over Against the World in Us

Think of the world. Is He far above all rule and authority? Are we really where He is in this matter, far above all in Him, where the world is concerned? Well, the answer is no theory, no beautiful ideal just to contemplate, this is something in practical experience; the answer to this. But what a tremendous power this world is, what a force, how much the world is to its own, is it not? The world is everything, and it is a tremendous thing to the people of it. Think of all the fear, almost terror, that people feel when they contemplate having the world against them, not being in its favour; its opinion, judgment and attitude all against them. It strikes a note of terror; it has such a power. What we were speaking about earlier, this world system in the realm of the soul, the soul life, the standards of this world, the motives and judgments of this world do govern our souls so much. Well, how can we illustrate that? There is a simple little thing which we have often used which really does give us the clue to understanding. It is what Paul said in his letter to the Galatians in his last reference to the cross, the last of several references to the cross, in that letter. He said, "far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). And what did he mean? Well, the immediate context shows.

Paul says, 'These Judaizers who are following me round everywhere and seeking to undo my work, by telling you that circumcision avails nothing and uncircumcision avails nothing (now that has nothing to do with it, it is a new creation). But they are following me round and they are saying, You must be circumcised or you cannot be saved. And he says what they are after is to get you converted to their beliefs in order that they may go home and say, We have had so many converts, "that they may glory in your flesh", saying, Look how many people we are getting converted.' You see the principle. Paul calls that the world principle. Oh, glorying in men, glorying in numbers, glorying in what looks like success and prosperity in your work, glorying in being able to send in a report of so many converts, you see how successful our work is. He says that is the world. "I have been crucified" with to that, I am no longer

one little bit influenced by that kind of thing, what I can show for my work. The thing that matters is that I am faithful to God, faithful to Jesus Christ, and it is not of any account to me at all whether I can send back to Antioch or Jerusalem and say, Look here, we have had three thousand conversions, we have got so many people to follow our teaching. That is not it. That is the world, he says. It is the principle, you see. I only take it as an example of this thing, the world, and you know it is not an easy thing to the flesh to have no reports like that to send home, never to be able to write up a report of your work and point out how successful it is, to have something to point to that vindicates you, justifies you, that establishes you and your reputation, never to have anything like that. It goes hard against the flesh.

And here was Paul seeing his converts turned aside everywhere and at last having to say, “All they in Asia be turned from me”, but he is in victory. He is saved from the world spirit, the world motive, which is always a glorifying of the flesh. Is that not the world principle, the world motive? And it works in many other ways. But what a mighty thing it is to be completely delivered from that.

Now, you see, the Lord Jesus was offered all the kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof and the tempter said, “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matt. 4:9). The world on the one hand and all its glory; on the other, the cross and all its shame, and He chooses the cross. He has victory over the world, but on the ground of that victory there is a prophetic psalm which runs, “Ask of me”. This is addressed by the Father to the Son: “Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Ps. 2:8), and He is getting it, and the day is in view when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ, and not at the hands of the devil. He has overcome the world in that sense. But what a mighty thing that is, to have that world rooted out of us so that it no longer matters what the world thinks, what its judgments are, what attitudes it takes towards us, on these very acute matters of our having nothing much to show for the course we are taking with the Lord, and certainly nothing to write up, but our faithfulness to the Lord is the only thing that remains. That is victory, but that is mighty grace working, and that is the power of God. over the world in us. Is He above all?

Now, you could never have taken that position but for some power greater than the world in your life. It does matter to us, let us be quite honest, it does matter to our flesh, our natural life, what the reactions of people are, how they talk about us and think about us, and what they do where we are concerned, and whether they open or close their doors to us, whether we get

the advantages that they are able to put in our way or not. All that sort of thing does touch our flesh, if we like to live in that realm, but the grace of God does something that simply lifts us clean out of that that it no longer matters. But that is a mighty thing, you know, because that flesh is very real, is it not? It is very real, and some of you young people know it, that because of your relationship to the Lord Jesus and your stand for the Lord Jesus the ‘plums’ do not come your way in this world. They are withheld, the special privileges and advantages that could be yours, you do not get them. Is that not true? Oh yes, you have to suffer the loss of many things because of your relationship with the Lord Jesus, but how does it affect you? Well, in your own flesh, of course, it hurts. It does not hurt so much that you go right down under and out. The grace of God makes you triumph. Grace triumphs. This is very practical. That is how you know that He is on the throne above all rule, the rule of this world in principle, the rule of sin in effect.

The Power of God’s Grace Over Against Suffering

And so we could go on with the various other ways in which this great power works, but perhaps we might just close with a word on the sufferings and the sorrows of the Lord’s people. We have read of Paul’s sufferings, and he has other catalogues in his letters of the sufferings which came his way because of Christ, and the sorrows that came to his heart because of Christ, great suffering, heart breaking sorrows, not a few, great and many. Read his letters again with this one thing in mind to discover what this man had to put up with, what he had to go through, what he had to endure. These words in Romans 8 that we have read are enough in themselves, but, as I say, he has got other catalogues, and there are many indications that this man had no ordinary sufferings and sorrows, but sufferings and sorrows enough to utterly desolate and devastate, to bring to full and final despair. He could have said, ‘He is not on the throne, the devil is on the throne, the world is having it all its own way, my enemies are just being allowed to do as they like, the Lord does not deliver me from suffering and sorrow.’ Looked at from one standpoint, there was enough to make up a case like that, but the marvellous thing, and God only knows how we are involving ourselves when we say this, is that this man not only managed to cope with it all, but he said, “We rejoice (glory, A.S.V. margin) in our tribulations” (Rom. 5:3), “that I may know him ... and the fellowship of his sufferings” (Phil. 3:10). That is not just being conqueror; that is more than conqueror.

Why? Well, he had come to see that this was the very way, and this was the very means employed by the Lord to make him know, firstly, grace, “My

grace is sufficient” (2 Cor. 12:9), triumphant grace, and on the other hand, to make these very sufferings, as we have said, work out for spiritual increase in himself and in the church. There was a certain vicariousness about his sufferings. I do not mean in the same sense as Christ’s vicarious and atoning death, but there was a vicarious about this man’s sufferings. He said, “I . . . fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church” (Col. 1:24). My sufferings are all being turned to account for the church. These very sufferings are an advantage to the church, a gain to the church. He saw that, and that is being more than conqueror. The point is, and you cannot fail to see it, that this man, with this mountain of suffering and sorrow, knew some power that deprived all these sufferings and sorrows of their power to destroy him. It is a marvellous thing at the end in the prison that he is so triumphant after all, with all that is going on, talking here about being in the heavenlies. There is something there that is not natural. That is no ordinary, human strength of endurance. No, there is a mighty infinite power at work here, the exceeding greatness of His power working through grace, and thus proving that, after all, Jesus is far above all rule, whatever that rule may be, the rule of sin, of the world, of suffering and sorrow, of death. For so many, contemplation of death brings fear and terror, but that is all extricated, like its sting, by the grace of God, by the love of God, by the power of God, and death is no longer the terror that it is to those who know not the grace of God.

