



the
Golden
Candlestick

**LIFE IN THE UNSEARCHABLE
RICHES OF CHRIST**

Part 2

T. Austin-Sparks

Volume 182

ATTAINING INCREASED SPIRITUAL CAPACITY

Prayer

Lord, we are very strongly and deeply conscious this hour calls for particular grace, particular wisdom, particular help from Thyself. Thou knowest we are seeking to bring everything to very practical issues. All the words, all the messages, all this volume of verbal expression has to have something of a really definite and concrete outcome and we are in these particular hours seeking to find the way for that. So we ask Thee for what is not possible to man, that Thou wilt show us the way. Teach us Thy way, O Lord, and lead us in a straight path, for Thy Name's sake. Amen.

Shall we remind ourselves of the special object of these messages. It is that we should bring all that is being brought before us to the focus of practical outcome, what has been the why, or rather the how of it all. It is a question, no doubt, which occupies many hearts and many minds. We see the truth, we accept the truth, we believe that is the truth, *but* how are we to get into it, or how is it to get into us? You remember that in the first message we considered spiritual capacity, the great need for increased spiritual capacity amongst the Lord's people and all the tragedy of the Christian life due to limited capacity. And how great is the need for inward enlargement, as Paul prayed, "that we may apprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, the length, the height, the depth, the knowledge surpassing". And we are attempting to get into that. It is an impossible thing of course with us, that enablement of the Lord.

How is enlargement of spiritual capacity to be attained? The answer to this question of spiritual capacity, spiritual measure, spiritual ability is of course found entirely in the cross. The cross is the answer to that question. But when that is said, that word is used, it has become so familiar that it no longer has any music, any charm, very little feel. You only have to mention the cross and so often the reaction is, "Oh, well, we know all about that. We've heard all that. You can't tell us much that is new about that." Alright, let's see. We will see what kind of a knowledge it is that we have. When we speak of the cross let us be very clear at once that we are speaking about death *and* resurrection. They both meet in the cross. The cross combines them both. They are centred there. And when we speak about the cross, we mean death and resurrection in our own history, not in

history dating right back two thousand years almost, not something that happened back there although, of course, that is where its root is. But we are now meaning, concerned with, death and resurrection and that of Christ in our *own* history, a part of our very history; an inward part of us. You do not think that I should stay to define that. You know what it is to have history in your blood, don't you? You may go to some parts of this world and come across that. For instance, when I go to Canada and meet with Canadians, they immediately say, "Oh, how is the old country?" And they want to talk about the old country and it isn't long before they will tell you all about their grandparents and their parents, and their own birth and their own home and the old country. It is in their blood! That is their history. They have inherited that. It is a part of them and they can't get away from it. The first opportunity to refer to it — there you are. And that may be true of other nationalities. Probably you more or less have that history in your blood to which you refer. And what I mean to say is that the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus is in our history. It is a part of *us*. It is not something we have taken on, accepted, adopted, mentally ascended to, and if some other thing came along which was equally appealing and attractive, we could let this go and take that. No, this has to be so much a part of us — and this is what we mean — as to be spiritual suicide to leave it or part with it. This is death and resurrection.

Well, now let me say one or two things that I don't like saying. It may not sound very pleasant. But we must get to the root of this. I am not talking about the doctrine or the teaching of the cross. You wouldn't believe, dear friends, how somehow or other, wherever I go, I seem to be the synonym for the doctrine of the cross and immediately people say, "You know, I have heard, I have received, the teaching of the cross, the message of the cross." I want to confess to you that I feel *bad* about that. I really do. They may be quite alright and they may be quite sincere but I am not talking about — and we are not concerned with — what is called the *message* of the cross, which is found in a book or books and literature, not found in some persons who stood for that, who are known, more than for anything else, for the message of the cross. None of that. I am not asking you to accept the 'message of the cross' however you may phrase it, identification with Christ in death, and burial, and resurrection and so on.

Oh, I often wish we would get rid of a lot of our phraseology. It is really misleading, it really detracts, it very often becomes empty and meaningless, although it may be for the people who use it very meaningful. But I think in every realm of our Christianity we need to revise our phraseology. We do. Now that's a subject which we could stay with for a long time, isn't it? You know what I mean by that? If we had a revolution in the realm of

phraseology, my word, what things would happen! You would never again on Sunday morning say you are going to church. Never again would you use that phrase, “I’m going to church.” Never again would you look at a certain kind of building and say, “That church.” And I could go over the whole gamut of phraseology which is not true to the New Testament meaning. Well, I must leave that. But let it be understood that this is not what we are now concerned with, something of a doctrine, a specific teaching, a phraseology, a terminology. No, not a terminology but a terminus. That is what we are talking about: a terminus — which is nothing less than a devastation in our history.

If the cross of Calvary of our Lord Jesus Christ was anything in the history of His disciples, it was a devastation. All the days immediately following His death they had lost their world. They had lost their hope, their expectation. They were lost men. No longer were they integrated; they were scattered, everywhere. Two walked down to Emmaus; they were here and there. Poor old Didymus (Thomas) is somewhere, away on his own, shut up in dark, dark despair. Peter, weeping bitterly, has gone we know not where. What is this language that these two are saying, “We had hoped, we had hoped that it should be He who would redeem Israel.” “We had hoped”, implying hope shattered? The cross was a devastation. And if the Lord Jesus hadn’t risen, that was how it would have remained. And when He arose His first task was to gather up the scattered pieces and fragments, and bring them together again and put new hope into them. The cross is a devastation. Maybe more or less that at one time. But sooner or later it is going to be that absolutely. If you wait thirty, fifty years as a Christian, it is going to be that. I was a minister credited of two denominations at the same time, preaching everywhere, and all that. A full, full programme. And I was sincere, and very earnest, and reaching out for the best that I knew. And I was that for a large number of years before I met the real meaning of Romans 6. And I tell you it was a devastation which cut my whole life in two, like two different worlds. But I don’t want to talk about myself and what it meant there. You have to deduce from some of the things I say now that they are not things just being said; they have come from somewhere, from this history with God.

But we are talking about what the cross really is and what it is not. Perhaps the best approach is along the line of the positive and not the negative. The positive will prove the reality of the cross, the reality — our talk, our speech, our phraseology, our profession, our claims and all this, whether it really is real. The positive will show that. And the first thing that I would suggest, and this is where we come to a very practical issue. We may all have to face the first positive thing which arose with those disciples and must arise with all who have truly had the cross planted deeply into their history,

into their very constitution, and that is their adjustableness. And that's a tremendous ordeal for many.

You know, tradition is a tyrant. Tradition is a padlock upon the soul. Have you heard that? Don't write it in your notebook; write it inside. Tradition is a padlock upon the soul. Read your letter to the Galatians. And other things. Oh no, come back earlier than that. Have a look at Peter. He stands out as the first of the apostolic group. The cross has been planted very deeply in him. It has devastated him undoubtedly. But now the test is arising. And Peter is on the housetop praying, fasting and praying. And he falls into a trance and he sees the heaven opened, and a great sheet let down by its four corners, and in the sheet all manner of creatures, reptiles, four-footed creatures and this, that and the other, all the things Jews were forbidden to eat in the Book of Leviticus chapter 11. It was an embargo upon all those things written in Holy Scripture, and the voice from heaven says, to a Jew, "Rise Peter, kill and eat." Now then, the issue is out. How deep, how practical is the cross! I know what you are thinking — Does the Lord ever contradict His own Word, go back upon it? Yes, He does, if you understand Him rightly. "Rise Peter, kill and eat." "Eat." "Eat that reptile, that unclean beast, unclean creature? I, who stand foursquare upon the inspiration of the Bible, I, who have observed meticulously Leviticus 11 all my life? You tell me to go back upon that, to do the very thing that is forbidden there? This can't be the Lord. Lord, You are making a mistake about this. No, no. This is not You, Lord." Nevertheless this thing was done three times. The Lord is insisting, not letting him off. And then the Lord brings in the cross, brings the cross right before Peter. And in effect says, "Well, Peter, what about the cross? What God hath cleansed ... There is a fountain open for all uncleanness — what God hath cleansed. Oh, surely, surely it doesn't apply to this kind of person and that kind of person, this nationality and that — we are the people. Now then Peter, your tradition is right in the way. It is right in the way of the outworking of the cross. The cross makes tremendous differences in these matters. You have to undo that padlock on your soul, Peter. You have to let Me have My way through your tradition, Peter. The cross has done something to change the whole position over Leviticus 11 — "What God hath cleansed ...". And you see the application? Who were the unclean creatures in the conception and conviction of Simon Peter? — the Gentiles. Those outside of the pale of Judaism. They are the dogs and you don't make a meal of a dog. They were called the dogs. Unclean for food. They were the unclean, the Gentiles, but God hath cleansed the Gentiles. The cross embodies and embraces *all*.

You know, dear friends, we have made a great mistake. (I am preaching now, instead of introducing this.) We have made a great mistake in our

doctrine in this matter. We think that only the saved people are redeemed. If we do that, we have made the biggest mistake of all. The whole world to the deepest, blackest sinner is a redeemed person. That is not universal. No, no, don't misunderstand me. *The* tragedy will be that those for whom redemption was accomplished, do not enter into the good of it; they refuse it. It is there for them. They are redeemed. The whole world is a redeemed world. But the whole world will not accept its redemption. Oh, the cross of Jesus Christ, you see, goes far and it goes deep. But Peter is drawing a line by his tradition. And the whole issue now for Peter and for all of us is that of adjustableness by the cross. Can we be adjusted? Can we be adjusted over our traditions? Do you know, dear friends, that the Lord does some very strange things in His sovereignty and in His sovereign economy He contradicts Himself from time to time. That is only a way of putting it.

Take the instance of the apostle Paul. Paul was born, bred, brought up and deep-dyed a Jew, a Hebrew. And he tells us how deep, strong, far-reaching and involved this was. He was in it up to above his eyes, by birth, inheritance, tradition. It was a very part of him naturally to be in Jewry. And when the Lord comes to that man he hooks him right out of everything — right out of Jewry, right out of Judaism, right out of his inheritance. You might say, right out of his blood, and makes him the apostle of the Gentiles. Oh, do you say, “You see, in the sovereignty of God I was born in such-and-such a setting and brought up in that and taught this and that. Therefore, that's where I ought to stay. God has brought me into that by birth. And because God has done that, if God is sovereign, I ought to stay there.” Well, Paul's life contradicts you if you say that. There is a reason — always God is governed by a reason. You see, I was, as I have told you, fully, deeply in that setting of organised Christianity and I believe to this day that the Lord sovereignly put me into that. Why? So that I would know what it is like, and know *how* to speak of that realm of emancipation and *the difference*. And Paul, sovereignly born and brought up in Jewry, knew it as no other man knew it or as few men knew it; he knew it inside out and upside down, knew it all, and he could talk about it with authority. And he spoke about the cross, my word, he could speak about the cross with a background in his history. God doesn't contradict Himself but He sometimes leads in a way and then pulls you right out of it and says, ‘That is not ultimately what I'm after. That was only for a purpose to teach you something, to show you something so that your life would be based upon a history, a knowledge, not a theory.’ You *know* what you are talking about from your background. Do you see the point?

Now the cross, you see, with Peter did just that. And so the Lord won the battle although Peter said, “Not so, Lord, not so, Lord”, the Lord won

the battle and off he went to the house of Cornelius. And the Holy Spirit fell on him anew with all that were in the house. Alright, that is the Holy Spirit standing by the cross, you see, upholding the cross.

Now, if we are not adjustable we may be in the way of the tragedy of missing the way, the tragedy of light verdict. Oh, I've lived long enough and had enough contacts to see some tragedies. I can tell you of them. I knew a dear man quite intimately who was greatly used of the Lord. He was on the platform of the biggest conventions. He was in demand as a conference speaker everywhere and I felt this man was going a long way and was going to stand for something. And then an issue arose in that man's life. I have to safeguard what I say because I do not want you to feel, friends, that because I say a thing and give something to support it that you have to go and do that. It has to come from *God* into you, not from man. Therefore I am free to say what it was. He had a worldwide ministry of real value and then the question of his denominational connection arose (it was in the strategy of God, I believe), and the issue became the whole church of God, the whole body of Christ, the great universal call, or, the denomination. He had a place in it. And it was no small thing for him to have to face this. And I saw him going through the crisis and the contortions. And eventually he decided for the denomination. That man is hardly heard of today although he is still alive. Whereas before this happened his name was connected with all the spiritual movements, and you could read in the religious papers before this happened that he was speaking here this week, and there next week. You never see his name now. He still has a place in his denomination, yes, and they make a lot of him. But he has lost all those platforms; they have gone.

Now because I've said that, don't you go and leave your denomination because I've said it! This thing must come from God to you as a matter of life or death. And don't move until it does. But here's a tragedy, you see. Playing safe. If I do that, you see what will happen to me? I will lose prestige.

I knew another dear servant of God. This man, foremost amongst evangelical spiritual ministries, in great spiritual responsibility, had a large heart, a very large heart, too large a heart. (Is that possible?) He was a man who was a noted liberal and modernist in theology. He was a nice man, you know, (and there are some good and nice men in that realm), a capable man and an attractive man. This man, this modernist, asked another man to write a foreword to a book that he had written which was liberal theology, pure and simple. "Oh, will you write a foreword commending your brother?" And he did it. The consequence was that this modernist lost everything of his great sphere of spiritual usefulness and died with a broken heart. This is a tragedy of popularity. Popularity. And I could go on. I could give some examples more sad than that.

But, here's the point: the cross will prove whether it is real in our lives. If it deals with our prejudices, preferences, our likes natural, dislikes natural, our ambitions, our popularity, our compromises, or whether we are really in the Lord's hands to be adjustable at any cost. And you and I ought to know that the cross is suffering love. Oh, some of the exponents of the message of the cross are so legal, so hard. They put such a drive on other people to get them crucified, putting their hands on people's lives as they say, to get them to the cross. In other words, it means to crucify them. God help us.

On the other hand, the cross is suffering love and when the cross really comes in, it brings suffering. And so I am going to say right away that there will be no increase and enlargement of spiritual capacity without suffering. I know plenty of people who embrace the message of the cross and preach it, but, my word, they know nothing about suffering. They have never been broken. Loud, strong, they preach the cross. Uncrucified men. Unbroken men. The cross is suffering love. And if that is not how we are, we really after all do not know anything about it. You know David of whom we have been speaking. David lost his throne, and his city and a large part of his people for a time in a terrible tragedy and eclipse of everything for him as he escaped and went off weeping. All because of sentimentality in his family — Absalom. Absalom had committed murder, and David had brought the murderer back without any confession, without any repentance, without any adjustment. He had brought him back home. And then you know the story, what that son did in driving his father out, taking the throne and then being slain in divine retribution. But even then, David says: "Oh, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom. Absalom, my son, would God I had died for thee?" And a very unspiritual and carnal man saw through it, and said to David, "Look here, if your son's life had been spared and the whole nation had been slaughtered, would you sooner have had it that way?" Sentiment! Sentiment in the place of principle. The cross stands strongly by principle even if it goes against our sentimentalism. Well, you must think about that.

Questions and answers

Well, there we are, you see, adjustableness is a tremendous thing as something that results from the cross. I would like to mention other things that result from the cross but I didn't intend to talk so long and just wanted to open the way for questions and answers. It is inevitable that in a conference like this, this matter of the cross will arise. Sometime or other it will come up and we will have to face it anew. And we can test whether after all our doctrine, teaching, of the cross is real. Oh, it is a wonderful thing when this really begins to take place in us. I look at those eleven disciples who

became eleven apostles. I see them in the earlier days with Christ, with, as it were, a brass dome over their minds. He could talk, He could speak, but they couldn't understand for the life of them. They didn't know what He was talking about, what He meant; that was His trouble with them all the time. There was a dome. He gave all His teaching. But they couldn't grasp it. The cross, the cross and after. "And they, the rulers, took knowledge of them that they were unlearned and ignorant men."

Alright, but later the dome has gone. The heaven is cleft asunder, they are seeing the meaning of the Scriptures all the way back. Listen to Peter on the day of Pentecost, how he is quoting the Scriptures. This is that — I never saw that before. Just heaping Scripture upon Scripture with its interpretation and its meaning. They have an entirely new knowledge, or a new capacity for understanding what they never could grasp before. That will prove whether the cross has really begun to work in us — a new capacity for grasping the spiritual meaning of divine things. I tell you it is wonderful when you have this dome removed and you have this open heaven. It is only a beginning; we go on for ever that way. But it is a wonderful thing when it begins. "Oh, I never saw that before! The Word was closed to me before, but my, now it's open. It's alive!" And I think I can say, we who are ministering to you are ministering simply because God has given us that open heaven — in a little way, a small way to see His meanings, not what He says, but what He *means*. There is a lot of difference you know, between the two.

[*Question:*] The cross has to be enacted in your life by the Lord Himself. You cannot crucify yourself. And He chooses many ways in which to do that: by suffering, adversity, sickness, sorrow. All these things that have happened in our lives up to the present time are part of God's enacting the cross in our lives. Is that right?

[*Answer:*] That's right. And the effect of it depends on your reaction to it. I would suggest this to you, dear friends, as basic and fundamental, that knowing the truth, knowing the message, knowing the Word is not enough. You must take it to the Lord. For example, take Romans 6, knowing it. You take it to the Lord, you take your knowledge to the Lord. And you say, "Now Lord, I believe this is what you want, is what you mean. I definitely have a transaction with You, that You in Your own way, in Your own time, will make that good in my history." Ah, but dare you do that? Dare you? It may not be long before something happens, and you say, "Oh, I didn't mean *this*. No, Lord, I didn't think it meant *that*." Now, will you? It is suffering love and it isn't love for yourself but for your Lord. Alright, have a definite transaction with the Lord. I had to do that, and shut myself up in my room and faced everything — ministry, position, everything and got through a big battle. Thank God, He meant it and He saw through. But there it is.

In the old days, you know, of the Keswick Convention, in the early years that was the sort of thing that was happening. Dr. F.B. Meyer, who I knew very well, told me once, “You know, the Spirit of God came down on the Keswick Convention when the message of the cross had been preached in such a way that people went to their rooms straight away silently and solemnly, and you could see the lights in their room all night as they were on their knees getting through with it. Men went off to the lake and dropped their tobacco and their pipes in the lake, others went off to the post office to get postal orders to pay their debts. That is how things were when the Holy Spirit took hold of the cross, as it was then preached.” It is very practical, very practical. He said the post office was sold out of all their postal orders for debt paying — very practical. We have to have a transaction with God over this very definitely and hold Him to it if we really mean business with God. Perhaps it is better to talk to the Lord than to one another. Even in those of us who know most about it, there is still something more to be done.

Prayer

Lord, we do want to know the power of Thy resurrection, ever more and more, and all that comes with it. But it involves the fellowship of Thy suffering, being made conformable to Thy death. We do pray that every heart that is having a silent but sincere transaction, committal to Thee just now, may find Thee, encamping upon that ground, taking responsibility for all the consequences, and bleeding through not only into resurrection, in a new way, but into liberty from all grave-clothes of tradition and prejudice, what belonged to that past. Oh, Lord, Thou who readest every heart, take note and get out of this hour something eternally precious for Thyself. And Thy grace will be sufficient for us whatever it means. So help us. And Lord, do safeguard from all dissipation, distraction. Oh, do hold without any kind of intenseness that is soulical. Hold into a solemn joy in being found one with the Lord Jesus; His fellow in life, in death, in reproach, in rejection and despising, but in the joy set before. So help us. We ask in His Name. Amen.

THE RICHES OF CHRIST IN HIS PEOPLE (2) SONSHIP

Prayer

Lord, Thou knowest our reticence, and how afraid we are of just heaping on words, ideas, information, filling the mind and thereby blocking the channel to the Spirit, but we can do nothing but appeal to Thee and trust Thee that the Spirit of Truth will Himself pierce through the mind, the brain, the head, and right down into those innermost recesses and make the Word of God what it is said to be — sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. Lord, let this be the effect of the ministry already today, and now, and onward. We look to Thee in our need, in our helplessness apart from Thee. Do Thine own work for Thine own Name's sake. Amen.

You will remember that in our considerations in the previous chapter we stopped short and broke off before we were finished with what was on our heart when we were considering this other subject of the unsearchable riches of Christ — the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; and so we simply proceed with that now rather than follow on to a fresh aspect. But I want to say here at the outset that, of all that is being said in this conference, this is going to be probably the most difficult thing to grasp, to understand, and perhaps to accept. Referring to all the letters of the apostle Paul, Peter did say: “Our beloved brother Paul ... wherein (the letters) are some things hard to be understood.” Now whether Peter meant that for himself, in that he did not grasp it all, or whether he was speaking about other believers, I do not know. But I am not Paul, and I am not asking you to read my letters, but I do feel that about what is on my heart at this moment.

So we will come again to the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and again we are going to let Solomon help us as our interpreter, or our pointer. Inheritance means heirship, and heirship means sonship. In the Bible heirship means sonship with a particular connotation.

At this point we will read from I Chronicles 28:5,6: “And of all my sons (for the Lord has given me many sons), he has chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his Father.”

The Lord is leaping right ahead of David. Of course, as we have said, with another in view, the Greater Son of David, the Greater than Solomon, as Jesus said. So then, sonship is the focus of this meditation.

In these verses, as in others in this context, there is a selectiveness about this matter of sonship. “The Lord has given me many sons” — but ‘He has chosen, He has selected Solomon my son’. We know that David had many sons. We do not know very much about most of them. One or two stand out conspicuously, like Absalom and Adonijah, but of all his sons, God selected Solomon, the son of David’s old age. At the point of ripeness and maturity, sonship came into full view. The principle and reality of sonship emerged from a long history of maturing, ripening, of bringing to spiritual fullness. This maturity in David, out of which this sonship sprang forth, was through a long history of discipline, and a deep and bitter experience of suffering.

First, there were the sufferings from without, and here we must bring to mind more than I say. No sooner was David anointed as a youth than trouble started in his life. Suffering! What a long-drawn-out period of suffering and discipline that man saw from the day that Saul espied him, eyed him with a jealous eye, and hurled his spear at him to transfix him. David evaded the spear and fled. On to those years of being hunted among the rocks and in the desert, so that he cried: “I am like a pelican in the wilderness, like a sparrow upon the housetop.” You know the long, bitter history of suffering coming upon him from without because of the anointing. Here you have to do some changing in your thinking. Oh, if only we had the anointing — wouldn’t that be wonderful? Because of the anointing trouble began, suffering began from without, persecution, and the envious, jealous forces. And then that second period of suffering, for it did not stop when Saul was out of the way. I think perhaps David thought at one time: ‘Well, if only Saul is out of the way, then life will go smoothly’, but when Saul was smitten in battle, David’s troubles did not cease. They changed, and now the period of suffering is through his own faults. Formerly it was not the suffering for *his* faults at all, but now it is through his own faults.

We mentioned Absalom, the murderer, who was brought back by David to Jerusalem without repentance, without contrition, in pride. We know the story of how David suffered because of that weakness on his part, the weakness of sentimentality as over against divine principle. Oh, he suffered! I think that David never really got over the effect of that episode with Absalom. I believe that it registered something in his life forever after.

Then that great mistake of numbering Israel, the uprising of pride and arrogance, commanding that there should be a numbering. One narrative says that Satan provoked him to do it. The other does not say that, but he did it, and even the carnally-minded, unspiritual man, Joab, saw through it and

said: ‘The Lord make the people ten thousand times more, but should my lord the king, do this thing?’ Nevertheless, David brushed aside Joab’s judgment and went ahead and numbered. Do you remember the consequence? The angel of the Lord with his drawn sword offered David alternatives: pestilence, plagues, and so on, and the mowing down of thousands in Israel. This is a reaction to his pride — reducing is it not? He wanted to count heads for his own glory, but what suffering this was because of his own mistakes and faults.

Again, when he wanted to bring the ark to Jerusalem, he sent to bring it on a new cart, carrying the Testimony of the Lord on a bit of mechanical contrivance, a bit of organisation which had its origin and inception among the Philistines; and as the oxen came to the threshing floor, they stumbled; the ark was in peril, and Uzza put forth his hand to steady it. The Lord smote Uzza there so that he died before the Lord, and David was offended with the Lord, even angry, and he turned the ark aside into the house of Obed-Edom, where it stayed for a long time. It says, “the time was long”, and we can only imagine something of what David must have been going through because of that mistake. Policy in the place of principle! This world is run on policy in the place of principle; what is politic and what is diplomatic, not principle. How much there is of this even in Christianity! But here it is written, largely and clearly, that God does not hide the failures of his best ones. David must have suffered intensely over this mistake.

Then what about Bathsheba? We started with that, and we need not go over that sad, dark story again. Oh, the suffering that weaves itself through these Psalms: “My sin is ever before me ... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.” The suffering through his own mistakes. Let me say this at once: if you are ever looking for a man, be he a man of God of the highest status, who is faultless, you are going to be disappointed. There is only one faultless One.

Again, there is this about sovereign grace. If we were not believers, if we were not the Lord’s, if we were not under the hand of the Lord, these mistakes and blunders that we make, these wrong things in our lives, would be our entire undoing. We should be sorrowing as those who had no hope. But while it is true that in the life of believers there are very often these shocking mistakes, God has a sovereign hold of us in order to train us.

Then, I think it must have been a poignant night for David when, after storing and stocking all the materials for the house of the Lord, to realise his lifelong ambition to find a place for the Lord, Nathan was sent by the Lord to say: “Thou shalt not build me an house.” That must have been a stunning blow and, I think, David must have had a very deep, dark time through the hours of that night. All his life’s ambition and all his preparations for its

realisation struck down with one blow! “Thou shalt not build me an house, but thy son after thee.”

Here are the sufferings through which this man went which brought him to spiritual maturity, and which made him the man to whom the Lord can refer again and again with pleasure and delight. The New Testament has nothing in it about the dark side of David’s life and yet it mentions him over thirty times. How wonderful the Lord is! How gracious! That is unsearchable grace!

We have said that sonship here has a particular connotation. Sonship in the New Testament is not just the birth of a male child into the family. It is something more than that, and something different. Watch this closely, because I feel this to be one of the most vital issues. Yes, sonship in the New Testament is more than birth into the Lord’s family. Of course, birth and childhood are potential sonship. We are sons of God through birth potentially, but not absolutely. There is a special word in the New Testament related to sonship, not to childhood but to *sonship*, and that word is ‘adoption’. And adoption in the New Testament is something different from birth and from being a child in the family.

Once I asked a Hebrew and Greek scholar whether this idea of Paul’s adoption has a place in the Hebrew economy or not, because I could not find it in the Mosaic economy in the Old Testament. He confirmed that this idea of adoption has no place in the Hebrew economy whatsoever. Then I said I could not find it in the Greek world either and that I could only find this idea that Paul has about adoption in the Roman world, as a part of the Roman system and economy. He agreed and gave me the following information, illustrating Paul’s acquaintance with Roman law: “In Roman law, the process of legal adoption by which the chosen heir became entitled not only to the reversion of the property but to the civil status, to the burdens as well as the rights of the adopter, became, as it were, the other self of the adopter, one with him. This was a principle and a practice in Roman law. It was the placing of one, who was already a child in the family, in the position of responsibility to represent and act for the father who adopted his own child for that purpose. There was a ceremony of adoption of his own child, the boy who was with him through the years in the family. His own child came to the day when he was placed and given the father’s honour, the father’s responsibility, the father’s trust that wherever that son went, it was in effect the going of his father.”

Now Paul has lifted that right out of the Roman economy and brought it into the Christian teaching throughout, and he says it again and again. I would like you to note that that word ‘adoption’ is usually in the future. Romans 8:23: “Waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our

body”, and “... waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:19). It is in the future. There is nothing wrong in being a child of God. Adoption is child-placing, and that is Hebrews 12, if you read it carefully: “And scourges every son whom He *places*” (verse 6). That is in the original, not, “whom He receives”. Adoption is child-placing, placing in the meaning of sonship. Let me say here that sonship in the New Testament is the highest and greatest thing that God has ever revealed to man. The greatest thing that God has ever revealed to man is this destiny to which He has called him, to be sons. You will note that the letter to the Hebrews is wholly based upon this. It begins with: “God has spoken Son-wise”. At the end of all His ‘speakings’ He has now spoken “Son-wise”. The original does not say: “in His Son”, but, of course, it means that. It just says, ‘Son-wise’, and then the whole letter goes on on that basis.

‘Sonship’ means the full concept of God in creating man, the representation of God. “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”. What is that if it is not representation of God? When you will see the man perfected, you will see God in expression. Whether it will be the city, or the bride, or body, or whatever it is, when the work is finished, it will be that man is an expression, a representation of God. That is the destiny for which God called and created man.

When the Lord put His hand on Solomon: “Solomon, thy son”; “The Lord has chosen Solomon of all my sons”, it was with the throne immediately in view, a governmental position and responsibility. Sonship emerges in this great trust for God throughout the ages to come in government.

This is inherent in sonship. It is the throne, rulership, the great trust and honour God conferred upon the sons, and this is the explanation of the child-training. You know Hebrews 12: “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord ... Whom the Lord loves He chastens ... God deals with you as with sons ... We had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us ... as seemed good to them.” “We had the father of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of our spirits?” Oh, that has a big context; the Father of our spirits, that which was born again. Not our body and not our souls, but our spirit. “The Father of our spirits”, and this child-training, this disciplining goes right to the depth of our inner being.

Many years ago I was speaking at a Keswick convention in the south of England, and after the meeting a brother came to me. I had not met him before and discovered that he was a doctor. He said: ‘Mr. Sparks, my wife is an invalid and has been confined to bed for twenty years. I wish you would come along and pay her a visit, and have prayer with her. I think it would be a help to her.’ I said I would come that afternoon. I went home and prayed

about this, saying: ‘Oh Lord, make me a blessing to this dear woman’, and so on. I put myself in the position, you see, of going to help somebody in trouble. I arrived at the house. The doctor opened the door and said: ‘Come on in and go upstairs.’ I went up and he showed me into the bedroom. Well, I was expecting to find a poor, suffering woman bowed down and in distress, but I saw in that bed something radiant! The room was filled with the peace of God. I did not kneel down. I sat down, and she began to talk with me. If ever there was a flowing out of a stream of life, of glory! Do you think I could pray for that dear woman, to be a blessing to her? I went down in utter shame. I minister to her? I do not know anything about her suffering. I remember this incident, as you see, to this day. She could have lain there and moaned about her long-drawn-out suffering, but instead of that, she reflected the glory of the Lord because she was taking it in the right way as her spiritual training. I expect to find people like that in a very high place in the city, in the kingdom, carrying responsibility.

My last touch with miss Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur was when she was near the end of her course. She had been lying for several years in complete helplessness and much suffering. I was shown into the room, and I went in quietly, wondering perhaps, what was I going to say that would be helpful to her at a time when I myself was being very much persecuted and ostracised. She had heard all about the bad reports concerning this man who was coming in, and I thought: ‘What am I going to meet here?’ She smiled beautifully and said: ‘Do sit down, I am so glad to meet you because you are a fellow-lover of my Lord, and that is all that matters.’ And the fragrance of Eden was in that room. The beauty of holiness, peace and joy, and she went quietly away to be with the Lord like that. It registered! Oh, you see, there are sufferings and sufferings. The Lord’s intention in our sufferings is our spiritual maturity. “If you suffer with Me, you shall reign together with Me.” It is the throne that is in view — not just to get into heaven, but to have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. That means being brought into a great responsibility, because we are qualified to take it through the work of God in us.

This is not a teaching, and this is not something I have read or concocted. This is something which has come to me along the line of a very big challenge. It is the challenge of the New Testament. Of course, it is implicit in the Old Testament, but particularly the challenge of the New Testament, and when you are brought face to face with what I have said and am saying, you are really brought face to face with your New Testament. Take it on the broadest basis, why is it that more than ninety per cent of the New Testament was written for Christians? If you are a Christian, if you are born again, if you have accepted the Lord Jesus as Saviour, have you not everything?

Have you not arrived? What more is necessary? Why the New Testament, then? Even the Gospels were written for the believers. Why all this New Testament, with all its entreaty, admonitions, exhortation and warning to *believers*? Well, some have resolved it in systematised doctrine, and that is the strength of Arminianism: because your salvation is in danger, because it is possible, having once been saved, to be eternally lost; once having received the gift of eternal life, to have it taken away. Believe that if you like. I do not believe that that is the answer to the New Testament any more than the other extreme is the answer, ultra-Calvinism. Ultra-Calvinism is only another word for fatalism. Fatalism is, what is to be will be. Well, why this New Testament, with its appeals and warnings, if there is not something more than being saved? That is the question that arises if there is not a difference between a child and a son, or between being in the family and obtaining the inheritance.

What about Paul personally? I came up against this and you cannot put on blinkers over this matter. You must look it straight in the face. Paul in his letter to the Philippians is at the end of his long life of devotion, service and suffering, and there is no man more utter for the Lord than this one. Here he is in his prison in the last days of his life, and he is saying: “Brethren, I count not myself yet to have attained, neither am I already complete, full, but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the prize of the on-high calling.” The prize of the on-high calling! Do you believe that Paul was afraid of losing his salvation at that time? Oh, it would involve the righteousness of God and a lot of other things, too. No, he has seen something beyond being saved. Gloriously saved, wonderfully saved and fully saved, but he has seen something more and that is *why* he was saved, *unto what*! Here is God’s man, and hear him say to the Corinthians: “Lest having preached to others, having helped others, I myself shall be rejected”. For what? The prize! “Lest I should be rejected, cast away, when it comes to the prize”. No, Paul’s fear was not the fear of losing his salvation.

We come to this letter to the Hebrews and, as I have said, it is built upon this very thing, sonship, from beginning to end. In the end sonship is set forth in the running of a race with ‘so great a cloud of witnesses’ in the heavenly gallery. “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the perfecter of faith; who for the joy that was set before Him ...”. Remember that the original says: “Instead of the joy set before Him”. When was that? On the mount of Transfiguration. He could have gone, as far as His own rights were concerned, right into the glory. Glory had come, and He could have gone up with the glory. He came down, and instead of the glory, He endured the cross and despised the shame.

The battle is getting more and more intense for believers to stand fast and to go right on. You ask some of our brethren in the Far East about that, in Siberia and China, and other places! It is becoming intense and difficult to hold on our way. It is a battle but, you see, the prize is there, and I do not understand the first two chapters of the book of the Revelation unless what I have been saying is quite true. “To him that overcomes”, is the word to Laodicea, “will I grant to sit with me in my throne.” You read those chapters again, and there is no logic in those letters if the people to whom they were addressed were not believers. “Let no man take thy crown”, says the Lord, to believers. “To him that overcomes”, and the high point of overcoming is “to sit with Me in My throne”, whatever that will be.

This is a matter of vital consequence. Really, perhaps, it is what the Lord would bring to us as a challenge. It is what the letter to the Hebrews says: “Let us go on” — not laying the foundation, but, ‘Let us go on! Let us go on!’, not for our being saved, but the purpose of our being saved is bound up with our going on.

It is going to be costly, but I am quite sure (though sometimes even this kind of assurance and glorying becomes enshrouded in clouds) that when you and I come to glory and are placed, in that great day of adoption, where God eternally intended us to be, in that responsibility for governing the nations that will walk in the light of the city, we shall then say: ‘It was worth it all! Brothers, it was worth it all! Often I was tempted to just sit down, and be satisfied with being saved and getting into heaven, but I am glad that I never did compromise. It is worth it!’ The Lord help us to go on.

Prayer

In all this we need that touch of Thy finger, O Lord, where we see and understand how much we shall need of Thy grace to go on a lonely way, not understood perhaps by the majority of Christians, ostracised by even leaders amongst our people; a lonely way, a difficult way. Help us, Lord, not to cast away our confidence which has great recompense of reward. Help us to stand, withstand, and having done all, to stand. In the Name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

THE RICHES OF CHRIST IN THE WISDOM AND REVELATION OF GOD

Prayer

Lord, we remind our hearts before Thee that the initiative in everything has ever been with Thee. We can initiate nothing, and we ask Thee that Thou wouldest keep things in Thy hands and take full charge, to have them as all out from Thyself. Thine own Son did say that even the Son could do nothing out from Himself, but whatsoever He seeth the Father doing, and oh, how we know in this work that we can do nothing out from ourselves. Let it all be out from Thee, Lord, and of course, the glory will be Thine. It cannot be otherwise and we will see that it does come to Thee, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

Reading: Eph. 3:10; 1:17; Col. 1:28, 2:3; Rom. 11:33; 1 Kings 4:29, 5:12

To continue with this overwhelming and inexhaustible fulness of the unsearchable riches of Christ we will now occupy ourselves with “the riches of wisdom”. The Bible has a great deal to say about wisdom. The New Testament gives a very large and important place to spiritual wisdom.

Solomon will help us on this matter of wisdom now, for Solomon, even his very name, is the synonym for wisdom. Above everything else that God gave to Solomon was wisdom, and it was out of that gift of wisdom that everything else came. The Lord said: ‘Because you have asked for wisdom, I will give you all the other things, wealth, riches, etc.’ But the spring of all is wisdom. We know a little about the wisdom of Solomon. It says here that he spoke three thousand proverbs, and “his songs were a thousand and five. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springs out of the wall” (1 Kings 4:32,33). “He spoke also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes” — a master in the realm of natural history! The queen of Sheba came from a far country — and I am impressed with the way it is put — “to see the wisdom of Solomon”. To see it! You will see the point of that later.

But when we have said everything about Solomon’s wisdom, its many-sidedness, its versatility, its range and its depth, the climax was the building of the house of the Lord. All the wisdom that God gave him headed up to, and focused in, the house of the Lord, the building of God’s house. It was the fulfilment of the life ambition of his father, David, to find a place for the Lord. The house was Solomon’s masterpiece. When you look here and in the New Testament, you will find that wisdom finds its chief expression

in building. Paul takes hold of this and says: “As a wise master builder I laid a foundation.” Was there ever a wiser master builder among men than the apostle Paul? He built so well that for twenty centuries men have been, on the one hand, trying to pull down his building, and it stands intact today, triumphant over all. And on the other hand, that building is the one thing in which we are finding so much of the divine treasure, the divine beauty, the divine glory, the divine preciousness. It is defying all our attempts to fathom it, to exhaust it, to explain it! Here we are again, after all these years, still in the freshness of it. He built well. He was a wise master builder!

Well, as with Solomon this building wisdom was a gift from God, a real gift from God, so the apostle, who had so much understanding of this, prayed, “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom” ... “the spirit of wisdom in” — and now I am coming to the word — “in the *full knowledge* of Him”. It is a pity that the translators made the mistake of leaving out the word ‘*full*’. Well, we do not blame them, for they had a real business on hand, but here it is. You will notice that the simple word ‘knowledge’ is used in the New Testament in relation to the beginning of things: “This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ” (John 17:3). That is the beginning of the Christian life. This is “knowledge” — but when you come to the advanced point of the Christian life, as we have it in Ephesians, you have in the original that little prefix “*epi-gnosis*”. This is something more; it is full knowledge. And so the apostle is not praying that these believers may come into the first, elementary knowledge. He is praying that they may come into the full knowledge, and to come into full knowledge requires this gift of the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

Let me note another thing common to Solomon and to this prayer of Paul. This wisdom is the wisdom of the heart. The building requires wisdom, but it is wisdom of the heart. Did you notice what it said about God giving Solomon a wise and understanding heart? “I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart.” We said earlier that the heart has better reasons than the head. Love is a profound well of wisdom. The apostle prayed: “that He may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened”. There is an illustration of this very thing in the life of Solomon. Do you remember the incident of the two harlots and their two babes? They lived in a house and slept together with their two babes, and one of the babes was overlaid and smothered, and died in the night. Then came the quarrel as to whose should be the living babe — a terrible situation of life and death, death and life. The whole thing was brought to Solomon, and in his wisdom he did not look *at*, but *through*, these two women. Here is this one woman screaming and shouting: “That

living babe is mine. He belongs to me!’ Oh, she is in a state, and she is giving herself away. The other woman is in tears, and wringing her hands — a pathetic picture! Solomon says to his guards: ‘Bring me a sword. Take that living babe and divide it in two, and give half to each.’ The one woman stands back coldly, icily, but the other woman says: ‘Oh, no, no, do not take the life of that child. Give it to her rather than kill it.’ Solomon says: ‘Give the babe to her. She is the mother.’ The answer to this is ‘heart’. Wisdom is a matter of the heart. You see, the other thing is death undoing, spoiling, not building. Oh, anybody can destroy, any fool can destroy, but it is only where the heart is that there will be building. Well, here is a great illustration of the nature of wisdom — “the eyes of your heart being enlightened”. What is wisdom? Wisdom is more than knowledge. Wisdom is knowing how!

Years ago I knew a man who wanted a large job of building and reconstruction in his house done, and he got in touch with a builder and showed him what he wanted done. The builder sent his men, started the work, and got on with it. When it was finished he sent my friend his bill. It was just a total bill, ‘For doing such-and-such a job, so much’, and it was a heavy sum. The man whose house it was, looked at it and thought: ‘How does he make all this up?’ So he went to the builder and said: ‘Look, how do you make this all up? This is a big sum. Give me the details, will you?’ So the builder said: ‘For materials, so much; men’s time, so much; other details, so much.’ The man standing over him said: ‘But this is only half the bill. What is the other half?’ The builder replied: ‘The remainder is for knowing how!’ Yes, more than half the bill is for knowing how. That is wisdom! Wisdom is ‘knowing how’, and I suggest to you that the real problem of building a house of God is not that of getting people and materials, but lies in the other half — *how* to build. The value of divine wisdom is in its ability so to build as will stand the test of the centuries, of life of all times and remain intact, not only at the end of time, but throughout eternity. So to build is the essence of spiritual wisdom!

The system of this world, as probably you know, including man himself, rests upon a lie. The foundation of everything in the present world order has a lie in it. Man himself has blind spots about himself. Man himself is a lie. You and I, by nature, are a lie; we are false, not true to the original pattern; there is a lie in us. (You know how and when the lie was accepted: “Hath God said? Hath God said?”) The lie was injected into the soul-life of the race. Jesus said of Satan: “He is a liar from the beginning, and the father of it.” This inoculation, injection, of a lie is right at the very root and core and basis of this present world order, and that lie is going to find man out eventually, for it is developing until it reaches full growth, and then it will be fully exposed. It will be shown to the universe how false this thing is.

John Ruskin, the great critic, went to Italy to look at some of the great

buildings and the architecture there. He came back and wrote his famous book, 'The Seven Lamps of Architecture'. One chapter was: 'The Lamp of Truth', and in it he tells us how he went from building to building, and came upon a building which had been very beautiful and costly at one time, but now the beautiful frescoes were spoiled by rain having penetrated through cracks. The roof was out of the straight, and the building was deserted. He said: 'When I investigated I found that there was a lie in the foundation. The builder had built falsely, and he had put a lie into the foundation, and the exposure of that falsehood in the wellnigh collapse of the whole building, the desertion of it, was a monument to a builder's untruthfulness.' It is like that with this creation. Make no mistake about it, you and I by nature are, at the very root of our being, false. There is a contradiction in us. We inherited it from the beginning, it is there in our nature. And there is a lie in this whole present world system, a deception, a falsehood, a misleading, a duplicity, a trick, and, oh, how it is working out! Well, it is a remarkable time in which we are living. Oh, what has happened in our lifetime! Much has happened in the lifetime of some of you youngest ones, but in the lifetime of some of us older ones, what a lot has happened in rapid development in this world! We are seeing all this development on earth, in the universe, coming to full growth. There is such a lie in it that the end of that wisdom is going to destroy this creation.

If Peter wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and as an ignorant and unlearned fisherman could never have written, on the atomic age, then this is going to happen! The elements are going to be on fire and be burned up with a fervent heat, and all these things are going to be dissolved at a universal Hiroshima. The Bible says that it is going to happen! It is foretold that all these things must be dissolved. Whether the church is gone before or not is another matter, but this is going to happen because there is a lie in the wisdom of man, and James says: "The wisdom which is from beneath is devilish, demoniacal; the wisdom that is from above is peaceable." This falsehood, this false wisdom, is destructive, and God is doing now what He did in the case of Israel. I wonder if you have ever noticed why the children of Jacob had to stay in Egypt over four hundred years? The Lord told Abraham when He made the covenant with him, that his seed would be in Egypt four hundred years. Why? Well, the answer may have more than one aspect, but the Lord has shown why in one particular: "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." The 'Amorite' is an inclusive term. God is not going to deal with the Amorites until their cup of iniquity is full. Oh, if this still applies, it is a rather sad verdict upon what is happening today.

We know the awful avalanche of modern decline. It is a shocking situation, and it is done with impurity. The cup of iniquity is swiftly filling up.

There is another side, thank God! But this is one side of the picture and it is very terrible. You know that when Israel went into Babylon at last, it was for that reason in their case. I was shocked when reading of Josiah that “he brake down the houses of the Sodomites, that were in the house of the Lord” (2 Kings 23:7). Could there be anything worse? No wonder that the Lord said that if Noah, Daniel or Job were in that city they could not save it! Israel’s cup of iniquity was so full as to put them beyond salvation. No wonder the judgment of Sodom must come upon Jerusalem by being taken into captivity, the cup of iniquity being filled (Jeremiah 23:14). This is the lie at the foundation.

Why am I saying all this? Because this building that the Holy Spirit is doing and this wisdom given by Him for building this house for eternity will never be burned up or consumed or destroyed or overthrown. This building by this wisdom is the embodiment of that which is absolutely and utterly contrary to the lie; it is the embodiment of the truth. This house is to stand as the undoing of the lie, the contradiction of everything that makes up a lie. In the Revelation the Holy City is the symbol of the church, and nothing that makes a lie will enter therein.

This, of course, gives tremendous emphasis upon the matter of soul and spirit. It is truth in the inward parts. It is in the spirit where the Spirit of truth is. Our souls were deceived. Make no mistake about it, if you live on the level of your soul, if that is your realm of life, you are going to be deceived. If it is the emotional side of your soul and you live only on your feelings, your very feelings can involve you in something that is a contradiction. If we are governed just by our feelings, by how we feel, what mistakes we can make. We may have good intentions and the best motives, like David bringing back the ark. In his emotions he got that new cart and so held up the testimony for many months, bringing all things to a standstill by his soulishness. If he had been moving in the Spirit, the Spirit would have said: ‘The Word of God says nothing about new carts for this purpose, but it speaks of living, sanctified and anointed men.’ The Spirit of Truth always leads to the Word of God.

The same is true if you live on that other side of your soul — the intellectual. That is obvious. Anybody who is always living in their head, in their intellect, is always in difficulty. Be careful that you are not there, and that you do not come back after these messages with lots of *merely mental questions*! Go to the Lord and say: ‘Lord, I do not understand what is being said, but, Lord, if this is the truth, You give me light.’ We who minister have to do that continuously. ‘Here is something in the Word. What does that mean? It is in the Word. I know that there is something there, but what is the Lord’s meaning of that?’ Well, then, off to the bookshelves to see what

this man says, and that man, and yet another man, and when we have it all, oh, the confusion! Very few of them agree.

I had a wonderful experience like that once over Gideon and his fleece. I was perplexed about this thing. What did it mean? Praying and thinking much about it, the Lord brought me over to 2 Corinthians 4:11-12: “Death works in us, but life in you. We are always delivered unto death ...”. Oh, this is the dry fleece and Gideon is going to fulfil a ministry which will be life and salvation for Israel, and that through the man who himself is feeling so utterly dry and insufficient. There are preachers who have had the experience that sometimes when they felt most dry, most weak and limited, oh, so useless, and they have battled through the ministry, it has often been at such a time that most people have come and said: ‘Oh, what a blessing!’ Is that not true? Now we can put it around the other way. Sometimes we feel that we had a wonderful time, the fleece is just wringing wet, just saturated, we are conscious that the Lord is with us, but no one comes to say anything about it. Sometimes, as in the case of our Lord, we have to give a living word to people who will not believe; we have to sow in faith.

I do not know what your funeral services are like, but in many funeral services in England there is a paragraph: ‘In the midst of life we are in death.’ If the spirit of life is in us, and death is all around; the Midianites and Amalekites and the children of the East like the sand of the seashore all around, and Gideon alone in life, we will reverse the funeral service and it will be: ‘In the midst of death we are in life.’ Paul had both experiences. It is just this matter of seeing a sudden ray of divine, heavenly light upon something that we did not understand, the spirit of revelation illuminating something about which we were full of perplexity, either in the Word or in our experience, and of our being able to say: ‘I see. Now I see!’

We know a young man, who has since been a missionary in Ethiopia for many years — a lovely, beautiful life. He was with us in our gatherings in London for a long time, and for about three years I was repeatedly speaking on: “Christ in you, the hope of glory”, the meaning of the indwelling Christ. He heard it for years and one day he came to me with a smiling face. He said: ‘Mr. Sparks, the Lord has shown me something. He has shown me that Christ is in me.’ He was telling me this as though I did not know anything about it. It was something in the Bible that he pointed out to me because it came to him like that. Why, no one else knew anything about it. It was so wonderful. He was emancipated by something that he had been listening to for years, hearing the words, sitting under the ministry for years, but suddenly it sprang into life and he was an emancipated man, out to serve the Lord for years faithfully in Ethiopia. The spirit of wisdom and revelation! That is really building, and that is how the building grows.

The hallmark of the spirit of wisdom in you and in me is our transparency, the truth. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria: “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall men worship the Father. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship in spirit and in truth.” Is all this in Jerusalem and Samaria false? Yes, it is not the real thing. It has an outward form, an outward shape, it makes an outward impression, and people think it is a very wonderful thing, but it is not the true thing. It is in spirit and in truth that the truth is found. Jesus, looking at that magnificent temple of Herod in Jerusalem, with His disciples and with the others — the critics, the enemies — did not point to the temple, but He was under its shadow and He said: “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again.” They said: “Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou raise it up in three days?” But John puts his little parenthesis of comment: “This spake He of the temple of His body, and after He was risen they remembered his words.” What is the true temple that is being built? It is not a thing, however much it is the embodiment of men’s ingenuity and artistic ability, however impressive may be its forms, its procedure, its ritual, its vestments and everything else. That is not what God is building.

It is just Jesus Christ — our being built into Him and He being built into us. Christ is the temple. Christ is the House of God, and only that which is built into Him, the living stones, is the temple. “Where two or three are gathered” ... “Where two or three are gathered into my name”. Oh, the tremendous meaning of that Name! The Name is the embodiment of Himself, His incarnation, His humanity. His life, His death, His resurrection, His exaltation, all that is true of Him is embodied in that Name, gathered into that “there I am”. That is the house that God is building. How different are our ideas of the house!

When we go to India, as soon as we get to the threshold of any household, we take off our sandals and leave them outside. Now to leave ourselves outside is the way of wisdom — to leave a whole host of things on the other side of the threshold. I am speaking figuratively, and there it is: only Christ. That is the house of God. That is the wisdom which is from above!

Prayer:

Again, Lord, we have to say that it is with Thee and for Thee, by the Spirit, to show us the truth, to illuminate our hearts and to guide us into all truth. Our part is to be open, submissive, committed. By Thy grace so it shall be for Thy glory, in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

To be continued.