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Golden  
Candlestick*

**SPIRITUAL FRUITFULNESS**

**Part 1**

**T. Austin-Sparks**

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*Volume 186*

## SPIRITUAL FRUITFULNESS

*Reading: Matthew 13:2-9, 17-23.*

Where this parable ends we begin, that is, by being reminded that the thing which matters more than all else is fruitfulness, the thing which we must continuously keep before our own hearts. That fact will at once be a sifting truth, for we shall have to judge everything which we have and which we know according to the measure of real spiritual fruitfulness. The glory of the Father is definitely bound up with the amount of fruit borne by His children. The glory of the Father is bound up with the fruitfulness of our life.

### **Fruitfulness a matter of Spirit and Life**

Fruitfulness is related to the Word of God. What are the properties of that Word? “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” These are not abstract elements. What is said about the Word is said about the Lord Jesus — He is “a life-giving spirit”. The Word is Christ mediated to the life. Fruitfulness is a matter of Christ as Spirit and Life finding increase in us through the Word, so that He becomes Spirit and Life to us, and through us to others. It is Christ living in us expressing Himself through us. It is the increase of the living Christ.

Various things are said in relation to this. Even this may be in different measures and degrees; the hundredfold, sixty, thirty. The hundredfold is where Christ is all and in all. But there may be sixty-fold, very good; thirty-fold, good. But the Lord would have it a hundredfold. How can that be? What leads to the hundredfold? What leads to fruitfulness, or the increase of the Lord as Spirit and Life? That brings us again to the seed sown.

Before we go further with that, let us remind ourselves of a further principle that obtains; it is that these Gospels only give truth in an illustrative way and in a germinal form. You have to look to the Epistles for the explanation of things here, and for the full development. We should never take hold of something in the Gospels and strain to try, from itself and its context, to get its full meaning. If you do you will find yourself landed into considerable

difficulties. But if you will recognise the fact that here you have truth in seed form, intimated, suggested, but not developed, not analysed, not opened up, just given to you, you will look later into the day of the Holy Spirit activities in relation to the truth for the development of these germ things.

It is so in the end of these parables, you will find that you dare not press the thing too closely. In a parable certain very definite things are being just referred to, and they are being wrapped up.

### **Necessary conditions**

We have here four kinds of ground mentioned, and on the Lord's own authority we know that these represent four conditions of heart and life, conditions for the increase of Christ as Spirit and Life through the Word.

#### ***Unbelief is ruled out***

There is one thing which has to be remembered before you approach the four kinds of ground, and that is that there is a kind of ground which does not obtain here. A fifth ground, which is ruled out altogether. You notice what the Lord says about the reason for speaking in parables. Referring to a word in the prophets He says quite distinctly that He speaks in parables because certain people had closed their eyes and refused the light, and therefore they were not going to be given straightforward truth any more. It would be only those people who had not so deliberately closed their eyes who would be brought into the secrets of the Kingdom. God has secrets, but He is not disclosing His secrets to certain people. Those secrets are reserved for others. The context makes that perfectly clear, that the ground which is not allowed into this realm is the ground of positive unbelief. So we need not deal with that at all. There is no hope for that; the door is closed. The Word will not be given there, and there is no hope, therefore, of even the thirtyfold in that direction. The Lord is not even sowing His seed in that realm of positive unbelief.

So we come on to the ground where such a thing as definite unbelief is set aside, and we find ourselves in a realm where it is not a question at all of: *Will not* have the Word. But even when you have got past that, you find yourself presented with many difficulties, and the people who are represented by the three grounds here are not the people who positively refuse to have the Word, who miss a thing of God because they *will not* believe. They miss it because of other things. It is not the: *Will not!* It is very largely in the realm of: *Cannot!* What it is that can and does, and what it is that cannot and does not.

### ***1) The darkened heart***

“And as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them.” What is that? In explaining this the Lord says that “the evil one snatcheth away that which hath been sown.” Why? What is the occasion for this? Here is an illuminating word: “When any one hears the word ... *and understands it not*, then comes the evil one and snatcheth away ...”. It is a matter of a lack of understanding providing the enemy with the ground for his work against the Word. But, of course, the rejoinder might be: Is that the responsibility of the individual? Yes! Now you want to follow through to the Epistles and see that a truth is merely hinted at here, and for its fuller unfolding you have to look at: “The god of this age hath blinded ...”. Again: “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God”. The enemy has provided his own ground in the natural life for his own work and here you have a darkened heart, a heart unenlightened. How can an unenlightened heart, a darkened heart, one with the understanding darkened respond to the Word of the Lord? It cannot be! Then what is required? What is it that opens the understanding, and, having once opened the understanding, destroys the power and the work of the enemy, the blinder, the darkener? If positive unbelief does not come in here, that does not mean that anybody without positive unbelief is capable of grasping the revelation of Christ. It means that specific faith is necessary. You may not be in a carnal state which says: I will not. You may be in a natural state, which simply says: I cannot. But while the carnal is a hopeless state, the natural is barren and unfruitful. Here something specific is necessary. It is the hearing of faith. “The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard.” It is one thing to hear the Word of the Lord; it is quite another thing to exercise faith in relation to that. Of the Thessalonians Paul said that they received the Word as the Word of God, and not the word of man. There was a definite exercise of faith with regard to the Word. And when faith is definitely exercised, something happens if it is the Word of God. Test it by faith. Open your heart to it, and do not question it in your mind; test it in your heart by faith, and it will prove itself.

It is not enough just to be free from positive unbelief. It is necessary, not to be just as we are without unbelief of a positive character, in a passive state, expecting that something may happen to us through the Word. It will not! It does not! There has to be an exercise of faith in relation to the Word, in relation to the Lord Jesus as the End of the Word, the Object of the Word. That faith produces the enlightenment, and destroys the darkening, blinding work of the enemy. The situation is quite clear. Here is a darkness, but it is not just a darkness which has occurred. Here is a blindness, but that is not

just because it has come about. That is positively the work of a darkener, a blinder. It originated through unbelief, and what is natural unbelief in the heart. But it may not be deliberate, positive, definite unbelief, such as characterised the Jews in Christ's time. It may be just the natural state of: I cannot! not: I will not! Then Christ is presented through the Word, and we do not have to remain in a passive attitude towards that. We have to say: Now here in this way Christ is presented as being such-and-such; I definitely exercise faith in Him as such, as through His Word; I take up a positive attitude towards this; I become inwardly active in relation to it. And in that way the enemy's blinding activity is destroyed through faith. It is our natural inability to take in the Word which gives the enemy his ground of snatching it away.

A natural inability to take it in does not end our responsibility. Our responsibility does not end when we say: Well, naturally I cannot. Our responsibility begins there. Are we going definitely to exercise ourselves over this matter, to reach out to the Lord? Are we in an inwardly active or passive condition concerning what is being presented? Upon that so much depends.

We may have presented to us the most glorious things about the Lord Jesus, and yet there be no fruit. We have heard them; we go away, and there is no fruit. There is no spirit and life in an increased measure. Why? We have been content with hearing, and presently when we look round for what we have heard it has gone; it is no longer with us. If we recall the phrases, the ideas, the thing itself is not there as it was. Now what lies between the thing being presented to us with all its possibilities, and the fruit of it becoming a reality in our lives? It is an action of faith in relation to it. Passivity here in a natural state gives the enemy all the ground that he wants to frustrate the ends of God. If all the Lord's people, whenever there had been presented to them something more of this, would act in faith in relation to that presentation, there would be wonderful results.

So the darkened heart, unenlightened, remaining passive in the presence of the presentation of Christ, is seen here in utter barrenness, even when all the possibilities of fruitfulness have been brought near.

## **2) *The shallow heart***

“And others fell upon the rocky places ... and because they had no root they withered away.” “And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that hearth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet has he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth.” What have we here? It is not that aspect of the natural state represented by the darkened heart. It is another aspect of the natural state. It is called “rocky”.

Although it may seem that this is an improvement upon the previous one, the end is just the same. The real and abiding increase of Christ does not come upon it. Here is a condition which is in the long run just as unfruitful. To put it the other way, here is a condition which makes fruitfulness impossible.

What is required here? Surely brokenness of heart. If it is hard, if it is rocky, if there is no depth — and this reality of Christ has to be planted right down into the very depths of our being, then the necessity is for brokenness. Ah! but that is cost, that is paying the price, that represents an estimate of the value of Christ above our own interests, our own comfort. It means what Paul meant — and here you see the germ of a great truth — “that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death ...”. Even Paul, at the end of his life, recognised and accepted the principle that an increase of the knowledge of Christ could only be by an increase in the knowledge of fellowship in his sufferings and a deepening of conformity to His death.

Do we understand the Lord in His breaking up, shattering providences? The Lord can only get His ends through breakings. At best there is in these natural lives of ours a place beyond which the Lord cannot go until He has done some breaking. The depths of natural capability may even vary in this matter, but in the ultimate issue the fulness of the Lord’s desire can only be reached by a breaking, deeper than nature, a getting down deeper than our own capacity. It is the creating of capacity by breaking through to the depths. The Lord has got to create capacity for Himself. How true it was: “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” The Lord had to reserve a great deal to the day when they were broken men. One reason for their inability to receive from the Lord what He wanted to give them was that they were so sure of themselves. Peter said: “I will never forsake thee”, “I will die with thee.” Alright Peter, that is the limit of your ability to receive what I want you to have, and because of that very thing you cannot follow Me! But afterwards Peter was so broken and shattered that he could follow, and he saw.

So there has to be a breaking, and that means willingness to be broken. It is enlargement of capacity. “No root in himself”, no depth of soil. They are words resultant from the work of the ‘I’. The Lord judges the whole, knowing what is in man, and says: You are not broken enough yet; you have not come to the place where you have learned inwardly the limits of your capacity. You may assent to it mentally, but you have to come to the place where you cannot, and you know it, brokenly so. And in a deep, humble dependence it is all of the Lord. The shallow and unbroken heart is here.

### 3) *The divided heart*

“And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up, and choked them.”  
“And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that heareth the word; and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”

What is this? It is a divided heart. It is a heart which would reach out to the Lord; a heart which has desires; a heart which has very good intentions. So has every seed! You notice how the seed and the man are made to blend in this parable. “He that is sown ...”. Suddenly you find yourself carried into a place where it is not the seed that is sown, but *he* that is sown. You find yourself in a complex. The Lord has changed his word. The fact that He makes that change means this, that the seed and the man become one in responsibility. The seed can do nothing apart from the man, even as the man can do nothing apart from the seed. They have now been joined in mutual responsibility. What is true of the seed as to its result, represents what is true of the man. The result, so far as the seed is concerned is the result of what the seed has found in the man.

The seed here has found intentions which correspond to itself. The seed is full of good intentions. The seed is full of good motives. The seed is full of good desires. The man is full of good desires, but there you stop. And with all the good intentions, and all the good motives, and all the good desires, and perhaps all the good possibilities — if the Word can only have its way — there are other things which weigh. The word “tribulation” is used: “when tribulation or persecution ariseth”. “Tribulation” there is the “tribulum”, the heavy weight. Other things are weighing on the mind and on the heart. Whether it be weights of concern, preoccupation, trouble, or whether it be the deceitfulness of riches — that is, the subtle, imperceptible grip upon the heart of possessions, things of this world — whatever it be, these things are taking such a place as to divide the heart with this far more important matter. And they are challenging the end of God in the life. So the heart is divided. It has its desires. It has its longings. It has its intentions. But if you get the figure very accurately here you will see that the seed was not sown *among* thorns. What the original does say, and what is clear if you notice, is that it was sown *upon* thorns. It does not mean that the thorns had grown before the seed was sown and that the seed happened to fall among grown thorns. It means that the thorns’ seed was there as well as the good seed. It also sprang up, and also grew, but it grew ahead of the other thing and got the advantage, the upper hand. The thorns were there, perhaps yet unseen, not manifested, but they were there. In the life there were other concerns which were hidden, other interests which weighed.

This is a very testing word. It is just possible for us to have secretly, hidden, almost, if not altogether, unperceived by ourselves, things which are weighing against the challenge of the fulness of Christ. We would say, if it were put to us, that nothing whatever would weigh with us against the fulness of Christ, *but* things do! The fact is that secretly in the heart there are considerations which are not standing against the bold presenting of the fulness of Christ, but standing against the costly way of reaching it. There is the fulness of Christ, but there is a way to be gone. There is a way of letting this world go. Do we say: This world has already gone for us? Yes, in a way — forms of pleasure, amusement, and all that we call “the world”; and yet, is not what Christian people think of us also a worldly element? Is it not Christian public opinion? Is it not in its very essence and nature the same thing as worldly public opinion? If you and I are going to hold our hand from going on with the Lord in some way because of what will be said in certain directions, though those directions be in the direction of Christians, what is the difference in that in principle from any man caring what the world thinks about it? We are using this as an illustration. There may be a secret, subtle hold of things upon us, as to amount to hesitating before we will take a further step which would involve us in having to let them go, lose more popularity, lose more acceptance, lose more of the opportunities which men could give us. It is a divided heart.

It is not the initially divided heart, which, on the one hand, is in the world, and, on the other hand, wants to be Christian; but all the way through to the end we shall find the challenge along this very line as to the dividedness of heart. On specific issues again and again there will be two sides; one the call, the other the cost; one the end, the other what must go to reach the end. The divided heart represents somewhere, somehow, in some degree, an unconsecrated heart. When you come to the man of Philippians 3 you come to the man who says: “... one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind ...”. There is no divided heart there.

#### ***4) A Spirit renewed heart***

This is the positive side. What is the good ground? What is the prepared heart? Obviously it is that which is without any of the things which have gone before, or, to put it on the positive side, it embraces all those things which were lacking in the other three. It is a heart enlightened through the exercise of faith. It is a heart broken and open to the Lord through deep work in the secret place. It is a heart wholly for the Lord, undivided, without reservation.

It is a Holy Spirit renewed heart: “... be ye transformed”, said the apostle, “by the renewing of your mind”; the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

## **The distinction between the three and the one**

One, two and three represent degrees of what we are going to call “uponness”. Number four represents inwardness. We may settle it once and for all that if a thing only comes “upon” us we are not going to have fruit, neither hundred, sixty or thirtyfold. If we begin to take truth upon us we are going to have a bad time. On that side you have calamity, tragedy, misery, and there is no fruitfulness. On the other hand, supposing you had an intellectual power of grasping truth without transmitting it to your nervous system, that you could cope with it intellectually, you are no more fruitful in that realm than in the other. Spirit and life are different things altogether from either the emotional or intellectual taking on of truth. Barrenness will be the result of both.

Some come to the barrenness because of that awful conscious inability to grasp, to understand, to come into the truth which has come on them. Others come to the cold, icy, stony barrenness of a merely intellectual grasp of the truth, and they think they have got it, and it is still a wilderness so far as spirit and life are concerned.

Let us go to the Lord and say: ‘Lord, that is something presented to me naturally; I may understand it in a measure, and be able to take it on mentally, or naturally I cannot grasp it, do not understand. I ask You definitely, as I hold this thing before You Lord, to make that thing live in my heart.’ I open my heart to the truth. I say: ‘Lord, I want with all my heart to be in all that You want me to be in, to know all of Christ that I should know. But the only way in which that can be is that my spirit is renewed by the Holy Spirit, and I now in faith count on You to do that, and I wait and hold on like that, that that shall be done.’ Take that attitude towards truth; otherwise there will only be a barren time.

The way into life is the way of the renewed spirit, the renewed understanding, the renewed, enlightened, quickened heart. Ask the Lord for that. That is why Paul in his prayer did not pray that they might have the eyes of their intellect enlightened. Paul was surrounded by crowds of people who had the eyes of their intellect enlightened, and he saw the tragedy of that. He prayed that the eyes of their heart might be enlightened. Ask the Lord for that. Seek that. That is the way of fruitfulness.

The measure in which we are prepared to pay the price, and to forsake the ground of the divided heart, the unbroken heart, the darkened heart, will be the measure in which the fruit is borne in us. A hundredfold? Yes! But how utter that means in our going on with the Lord! Sixtyfold is quite good, but speaks of a reservation somewhere. Thirtyfold is good, but it is less

than half of that which the Lord would have, less than half of that which we could have. The measure is the measure of Christ; but the measure of Christ is the measure of our capacity for Him; and the measure of our capacity is the measure in which these things which make fruitfulness impossible are forsaken; and the measure in which, going on with Him, things become inward.

The more you have of Christ, the more inward the life is. You may have a measure of Christ upon a certain level, or in a certain realm, towards the outside, a mere objective apprehension. You get another measure, and there is a mixture between the objective and the subjective apprehension. But when you get the fulness of Christ it will all be inward. It will all be Christ in your heart. That will mean that you have come to the place where nothing outside matters. All things which are supposed to represent Christ on the outside, all evidences, all proofs, all systems, have gone, and you have Christ in fulness. That is where Paul was at the end. Everything on the outside went. All they in Asia turned from him, and so on. But he had come to the place where it was all inside. Christ was the fulness within.

## THE FACT OF INWARDNESS

*Reading: Romans 12:1-2.*

These words, which form the beginning of chapter 12 in the letter to the Romans, bring us quite definitely to a very comprehensive, as well as a very definite and precise application of this principle of inwardness. This point in the letter is really a terminal point, and there is a sense in which it is *the* terminal point of the letter. That is, it looks right back over all the earlier part of the letter, gathers it up, brings it to a practical application, and carries it forward in a new realm. That is a statement which we will explain as we go along.

There are several changes mentioned in these two verses.

### **The reversing of an order**

We will take the one which now is the pivot upon which everything else revolves: “Be not fashioned according to this age (the word in the Authorised is “be not conformed to this world”), but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” There you have the reversing of an order. One line is being fashioned according to this age. The tense is that which means a progress, going on, being fashioned according to this age. The other line is being transformed by the renewing of the mind.

The difference there is twofold, one in the definite statement, and the other in the words used.

#### ***1) From the outward to the inward***

In the first place it is clearly a change from the outward to the inward. “Fashioned according to this age” means definitely taking a pattern outside of yourself, to which you are conforming your life; an objective pattern by which you are being governed, regulated, influenced or controlled. The opposite, and the reverse, is “transformed by the renewing of the mind”, an inward thing. From the outward to the inward; from the pattern or the fashion of the world, to the renewed mind.

## ***2) From the passing to the permanent***

The word “fashion” in the Greek is simply something which relates to this world, that is passing. The word “schema” means something which comes as a mode, a fashion for the time, and passes. But the word “transformed” (“morphē” in the Greek) is not the passing fashion but the permanent form of a thing. So you change from something passing as a fashion, to something permanent as a form.

That is the very heart of this letter to the Romans. We might say, in a sense, so far as we are concerned, that it is the heart of the New Testament. There is a tremendous difference between fashioning or conforming to something outward, and transformation or transfiguration by something happening within, or something which has happened within.

## **The renewal of the mind**

That brings us to the main matter: “... be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”. Thus the renewal of the mind is the key to everything. That is only saying in other words that the inwardness of things in relation to Christ is the key to everything; that things now in relation to the Lord have become basically and inclusively inward. Inasmuch as that is true, and we are living on that principle, along the line of the inward relationship with the Lord, we are being transformed.

We are not only being transformed in the matter of life and character. This chapter has especially to do with service, and ministry. Everything now, both in life and in service, is from within, and no longer from without. That is a thing which is needing so much stress. When we light upon that, we light upon an enormous factor, really a revolutionising factor. Those to whom that is in any way real, feel the tremendous strength of it, that everything now, both in life and in service, is from within.

That brings us to the point of the contrast which this chapter touches and refers to. These changes that are noted here, these reversings, gather up this whole letter, and bring into the realm of life. You see what follows: “... that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God”, or “what is the will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect”. That does not refer to knowing the will of God on all details in life; that is not the connection, although it will progressively work out in that way. But this will of God is a basic thing. It is something upon which everything else rests. You will see what we mean if you turn your attention to former parts in this letter with which these very clauses are dealing.

Take, for instance, the fragment in chapter 1 verse 9: “For God is my

witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son”. That is a contrasting word: “whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son”. Why does Paul put that there like that? It is not just a remark, not merely a statement. It is put there with the emphatic intention of showing the difference between worship (It is the same word. Conybeare says: “Whom I serve with the worship of my spirit”), and service on the old basis of outward things.

Note here in chapter 12 again: “... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, which is *your spiritual worship*”, your service. “Whom I serve with my spirit”. You have, he is saying, now passed altogether away from that old regime of outward sacrifices and outward forms of worship, as represented by the whole Jewish system. All that outward fashion of worship is passing in its nature, and is passed now with the coming of Christ. The inwardness is the abiding, the permanent, the form, and not the fashion. All the service is first of all inward. It comes from the inside, not from the outside.

This is a Levitical realm: “... present your bodies a living sacrifice”. It takes you right back into the Levitical realm, where slain sacrifices were offered. Now: “present your bodies a living sacrifice”. You have come away from that realm altogether; when you see the Levites busy serving God in these outward sacrifices and forms, it is but a fashion, a “schema”. It is only for a time, and that has passed. It was a type of something, an outward representation of an inward reality. But the reality could not be a reality until Christ came in fulfilment of the types, and now it becomes inward. Ministry is now not an outward thing, it springs from within: “... whom I serve with my spirit”, “... which is your spiritual worship”.

This word “that ye may prove”, means applying the test. Test the will of God. You may apply the infallible test as to the will of God, even what is good, and acceptable, and perfect. That will take you back to chapter 2 verses 17-24:

“Behold, thou callest thyself a Jew, and retest in the Law, and boastest of God’s favour, and knowest the will of God, and givest judgment upon good and evil, being instructed by the teaching of the Law. Thou deemest thyself a guide of the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the simple, a teacher of babes, possessing in the Law the perfect pattern of knowledge and of truth. Thou therefore that teachest thy neighbour, dost thou not teach thyself? ... Yea, as it is written, ‘Through you is the name of God blasphemed among the Gentiles’.”

One fragment of that only we will consider: “knowest the will of God”. So you see the outwardness of the whole thing in the Jewish system. Notice it again. “... retest in the law, boastest of God’s favour, (that is

merely traditional) and knowest the will of God (that is merely so far as written oracles are concerned), givest judgment upon good and evil (merely according to objective standards as written on tables of stone), being instructed by the teaching of the Law. Thou deemest thyself a guide to the blind ...”. It was an outward system, without a corresponding inward life.

That is taken up in chapter 12. How are you going *really* in a *living way* (not a technical, objective, traditional or historical way, not in all these ways which are outward), so that the thing is spirit and life in you, to know the will of God? Not as oracles written on tables, but as in your own heart by the renewing of the mind. Chapter 12 marks that tremendous movement from everything in relation to God as outward in a system, and everything in relation to God as inward in a life. What a tremendous thing is the renewing of the mind! What a tremendous thing is represented by the renewal of the mind! The inner man is the key to everything.

You come into an awful contradiction, bewilderment, unrest, if again you turn to the things of God as an outward thing, and try and comprehend them outwardly as presented truth. It cannot be done. God took pains through centuries to show through the whole history of this world that it cannot be done. He raised up a people, and presented to that people an outward form of His mind, comprehensive and detailed. He presented His thought to them and said: Now that is My mind in detail; work according to that! And through the course of centuries He proved for ever to man that that is not possible. Then He changed the dispensation, in bringing in His Son, to show that there was a Man Who could do it. But what a Man! A unique man! And then, having perfected it, that Man took it in His own Person to glory, and sent His Holy Spirit to reproduce it *in* saints, and not work it out again in an outward system to which saints had got to adhere and conform. The Holy Spirit’s requirement for doing that is an inner man renewed. If the inner man is renewed the Holy Spirit has got what He needs, and can do the work, so that in that basic and comprehensive way we know what the will of God is.

Do you see what that phrase refers to? “That ye may know (or apply the infallible test as to) the will of God”. What does that mean? Testing the will of God by the renewal of the inward man? It is really tremendously satisfying. It simply says this: Get into the realm where everything is inward, and cease to be in the realm where everything is outward, and you will know the truth. If you are simply governed by an outward religious system, and have to conform to it, and follow all its rules and regulations, and try and do God’s work and live according to God’s will, oh! the death of it, the burden of it, the paralysing of it, the confusion of it. You never get anywhere; you are moving round in a circle all the time; you come back continually to the point where

you started. Get emancipated from that whole thing by an inward revelation, by coming into the things of God in your spirit, and you will know this is the mind of the Lord, this is the will of God, this is the realm where you know that which is good, and acceptable, and perfect. It represents a tremendous transition, and those who have passed by that way, have just gone over that line, know the difference. They know what Paul is talking about when he says: You Jews have this whole system, it represents the things of God in life and service, and yet you are in bondage and in death, tied hand and foot by the whole thing, without any liberty. Now, says Paul, I have come out of that whole external system of things, into a realm where it is all Christ within, and I know the will of God as you Jews do not know. It is not merely now a matter of changed intellect, affections, the difference between what was once but a mental thing and what is now a thing of the heart: "whom I serve with my spirit". You see the change.

As to the knowing of the will of God in all details, you will never do that until you get this basis, the renewal of the mind. It is basic to everything.

The Lord is now not desirous of governing His people's lives by external orders. The Lord is now desirous of governing His children by inward witness.

Let us put in a parenthetical word of safeguarding. That does not dispense with the Word of God. We are taking for granted that there is a life in prayer and a life in the Word of God which are essential means for the Holy Spirit. But, taking that as accepted and recognised, the Holy Spirit desires that it shall be in our spirit through the Word, through prayer, that we come to know that which is the will of God, even the thing which is good, well-pleasing, and perfect.

So that to live in this present evil age is only possible by the inner man being renewed. To serve the Lord in abiding fruitfulness demands that it shall proceed from the inside. That is why things get such a little way when they are according to a set and accepted system of work. We use the word 'organise'. Well, there is an organised system of Christian activity at home and abroad, which is accepted, and people are drafted into it, and they take it up, and get on with it as the accepted thing. Without being for a moment censorious or critical we ask the question: Do we really have a proportionate fruitfulness with the tremendous number who are doing the work? When you think of the effect of a few in apostolic days, so far as abiding fruitfulness was concerned and spiritual value, to say nothing of the range, and then the number of Christians in the organised Christian system of today in an active way, is there any comparison between the results in spiritual fruit? Surely not! Why is it? Reasons may be various, and perhaps numerous. One

very real reason is this, that it is working in an order, a system, and it is not proceeding in every one out from the Lord in the inner man, does not begin there, and is not carried on as a stream from there.

So everything — life, work, knowing the will of God is a matter of the renewal of the inward man, the renewal of the mind.

Ask the Lord, in relation to all the things concerning Himself, that there may be a continuous and progressive renewal of the mind according to His Word. The Lord's people in the end of this age, which is the closing age, are shown to be very clearly by the Word of God, a people of the inwardness of the things of the Lord. Take a statement like that, and think about it in relation to the Word of God. The new covenant is constituted upon those terms: "I will make a new covenant . . . I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them." "They shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me." What is the nature of the knowledge? It is an inward knowledge of the Lord. If John's Gospel represents an end time, then John's letters represent this very thing: "The anointing which ye received of Him abides in you, and you need not that any one teach you." You will see from the Word that the Lord's intention, His desire, is that in the end all that which was outwardly indicated as His mind shall be inwardly and spiritually real in His people. It marks the great change in the dispensations.

Perhaps if there is one thing needed today more than another amongst the Lord's people it is that they should come to this very thing, where they know the things of the Lord, and the Lord Himself, in their own hearts. A very great deal of the trouble in the direction of schisms and divisions through the ages has been because of outward, mental acceptances, because of being taught (in some cases from infancy) to accept certain things, and not knowing of the existence of something quite other, and then one day becoming aware that there is something quite other, and people who represent the other sort, to whom that is the accepted thing and the thing that is right. Now it is a matter of conflict of mind, and you get divisions, and even in the realm where one thing may have been accepted mentally sooner or later some deviation, some turn in things, brings about a division, because of a mental handling of truth. Most of the trouble is there. There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit never says two contradictory things. The Spirit of God never presents two things which are in principle opposed. If the Lord's people really did know the Lord inwardly the only difference that would be possible amongst them would be the difference resultant from the measure of their spiritual growth. Some would not see as others, because they had not reached their point, but if it is only a measure, and not a kind, it is alright.

We have to be very careful that we do not confuse those things. To be governed by the Holy Spirit and know the Lord inwardly is to agree with everything that the Holy Spirit says. If the Lord could get a people like that, what a power there would be. Nothing outward can disturb such people.

### **The all-inclusive ground**

“I beseech you therefore, brethren ... to present your bodies a living sacrifice ...”. What is the point in presenting the body? This is the point where service arises in this letter. So far it has been a question of life, and now the question of spiritual service comes in, and the body is necessary to the Lord in relation to others here on the earth. The body’s peculiar object is relationship with others as an instrument and a vessel through which there is communicated to men and women the knowledge of God’s will. God has chosen, (not normally and as His usual way) to visit men by apparitions, visions, or direct spiritual means, even by angels. That is the unusual, and represents quite an extraordinary activity of God. God’s ordained method is to meet men through men, that He should have men and women in whom there is established this spiritual order, this spiritual reality, this spiritual knowledge of Him, so that, being the embodiment of that, men may not come into touch with an abstract, men may not come into touch with mere paid servants, but with living representatives of the mind of God, and the body is given as the vessel of the living representation of God’s mind.

You see that point worked out so clearly in the New Testament, taking Paul only, that he regarded himself personally as being peculiarly held for the expression, the personal, physical representation of the Testimony of the Lord Jesus: “... as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body ...”. Even though there was death working, yet there was something working against death all the time. It was the Testimony of Christ risen, that in his very body there was an expression of something of Christ Himself as risen, and what did he meet in his body? The accumulation of adversities coming against him physically in his body, in his human life, were all an accumulative opportunity for the expression of something superior. Get his catalogues of adversities. Why all these? Simply that all this is here, and yet over against it there is something other and more. So that his very body was a representation, a vessel, a channel, an instrument of the manifesting of the power of the risen, ascended, exalted Christ. We are not meaning merely and only in the matter of physical suffering, but the fact that he had a body here, and that that body was the vessel of the testimony against which men and demons were set; what it meant that there was a man here. That man met hell,

and yet hell was conquered through that man. It is an expression of what has happened in *the Man*. “Your bodies a living sacrifice”, that God may have *you* in the entirety of your human life as a vessel in which He is, and in which He is making Himself known, in order that spiritual service may be done, the registration of God through you and through me upon men and women in this world; that God should come out through human beings — not angels, not disembodied spirits — but vessels of fragile clay. Present your bodies living sacrifices, holy (that is, entirely consecrated), which is your spiritual service, as differing from the outward, external, material service of a Levite offering the body of a slain animal.

We are brought right back to the central thing. Everything is bound up with the renewal of the mind, the new man, quickened and brought into living fellowship with the Lord, “joined to the Lord one spirit”. For that we must ask and seek more and more, to know and to do as out from a new relationship with the Lord.

## THE VEIL TAKEN AWAY

*Reading: 2 Cor. 3:2-18; 4:1,3-6.*

These passages carry on the thoughts found in Romans 12, connected with the changes and transitions from the outward to the inward. There comes clearly into view here the fact that in Moses the revelation and ministration was outward, and in Christ the revelation and ministration is inward.

The difference is seen between the passing and the permanent. Twice over in these verses we find a reference to that which was passing. Then we come to that which remains. What is of Christ abides. What was of Moses passes.

Then the difference and the effect is noted. In the case of the revelation and ministration through and by Moses there was no transformation in the lives of God's people. Even at the time of the revelation and the ministration in glory their hearts were hardened. It had no heart effect upon them. That is clearly stated. Now here with that which comes in and through Christ it is a matter of heart effect: "God hath shined into our hearts", and the effect is that we are changed, transformed. The word in Romans 12 comes up here again. There it is by the renewing of our mind. Here it is by the inward revelation of the Lord Jesus, which is the same thing in effect. It is the transformation from within.

### **Life and ministry**

That has to do with the life, and then, following that, the ministry. The first effect of the revelation is the changing of the life itself. The second effect is out of that a ministry in power. The question of service arises once more: "... seeing we have this ministry ...".

The ministry according to the New Testament is the result of an inward revelation and transformation, and not the result of an objective or outward presentation.

### **The letter and the Spirit**

There is another contrast mentioned here in this part of the Word. It is the difference between the letter and the Spirit. You notice with these weighings

of one thing over against the other a list of things which come under one word “not”; not this, not that, not that, not something else. But then you have another list. Here it is *not* the letter *but* the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit makes alive. “The letter” corresponds to that which is written on tables of stone, as something objectively presented. It is a commandment imposed from without: “Thou shalt”, or, “thou shalt not”. That which takes its place is Christ, the Word of God; Christ, the Revelation. But not now presented to us as standard to which we must conform, but now as in our hearts in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is life; that is the Spirit as against the letter. One is death; the other is life. One is bondage; the other liberty.

Let us look at 2 Corinthians 3:16: “But whensoever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”

That veil, in its existence, sums up the whole of that life and service which is in bondage, or death. That veil, in its removal, represents the whole life and service in liberty, power and life. The apostle says in a great many more words: Now the existence of that veil speaks of limitation, bondage and death. That veil is the very symbol of limitation. The taking away of that veil is the taking away of all such limitation in life and in ministry. The veil represents a state in the first place, a natural state in man. It was not that God chose the veil, or imposed the veil. It was not God’s will to limit the glory in that way. The glory was spontaneous; the glory was there. But for the people’s condition there would have been no veil and the glory would have remained. But it was because of a state in the people that the veil had to be taken and used. They were not able to look upon the glory. They were not able to abide in the glory. Their own condition in nature rendered it impossible for them to remain in the unveiled glory. If the veil is taken away then that means that something has happened, a new capacity has been brought in, a new ability. Something has happened inside. Christ has been revealed in the heart.

When by the ministration of the Holy Spirit you and I see Christ, and the meaning of Christ, when we see what He is in the content of His very being as a Man, Who for men has met all the demands of the infinite glory, which glory is the expression of the infinite holiness, and faith has taken that Man as the answer to all those demands, the veil is removed, limitation has gone, bondage has gone, exclusion has gone. “Whensoever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” That relates to Moses turning away from the people and the condition that was in man, the condition as he found it in the people. When he was facing *that* the veil had to be put on. But when he turns away from the human condition to the Lord, and goes in where the Lord is, he takes the veil away. There is no need for a veil when you come into the presence of the Lord. What is the presence of the Lord in the most holy place? It is all

in virtue of what Christ is. You have the mercy seat, and you have the ark. In there it is Christ, and because of what Christ is in the presence of God, the glory is full, without a veil. And when it shall turn there, to the Lord, in virtue of what Christ is, the veil is taken away. Even Moses could only go into the presence of God on the ground of the precious blood and everything else which spoke of Christ.

While we are in the realm of what man is by nature we are under the limitation of a veil. Even though we may be towards ourselves, if we are looking in our own direction as Moses looked in the direction of the people, and taking ourselves into account as to what we are by nature, we come under a veil and the glory is at once arrested. Every kind of limitation falls upon us, and all that we are and do is in a realm of bondage. Face yourself in what you are by nature, and a veil is imposed at once. It is always so.

There are a lot of the Lord's people who are labouring under the veil, simply because they are looking at themselves and what they are by nature, but when they turn away from themselves unto the Lord, on the ground of what Christ is, the veil disappears. The limitation goes, the bondage goes, and the glory becomes full.

### **The veil speaks of a natural state**

The taking of the veil away is speaking of Christ having dealt with that natural state, having entered into it and put it away, and now it is not what I am but what He is, and the veil has gone. That is where we begin. But that is the basis of living victoriously. That is also the basis of ministry and service.

If you want the secret of Paul's great ministry, here it is. It was His great apprehension of Christ. No man had a lower opinion of himself than Paul did, but his low opinion of himself, his abhorring of himself, was never allowed to bring that veil back. For him it only meant a larger appreciation of Christ. He did not dwell upon what he was, saying always: Well, I am so-and-so, and I am therefore not fit for this service, and I dare not do it. No! Recognising himself, he also saw what Christ was, and the veil could not come in. He was a man without a veil, because of his turning to the Lord, away from himself both in life and in service.

Man cannot see God's glory if he is under the bondage of what he is in himself, in his natural state. Do you want to see the glory? Then turn your eyes away from yourself and keep them fastened upon Him and what He is for you.

We shall not even see the glory of God in a human face until our heart has been dealt with. We never shall see the glory of God anywhere until

the heart matter has been touched, and God has shined into our hearts. No wonder the Jews could not see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that Jesus of Nazareth was to them no different from any other man, and that they could regard Him, speak about Him, deal with Him on the basis of any man. They saw nothing more than an ordinary Jew amongst them. They did not see the glory. There was a veil between, because of what they were, because of the state of their heart. There is need for this work of God in our hearts, this inwardness of the divine operation to bring us into the place of the fulness of the glory and liberty of Christ. It is stressed in every part of the Word that the key to the whole situation is the inner man quickened, renewed, illumined. No matter how great, extensive, comprehensive may be our religious history, in so far as that is a thing which is different from an inward work and revelation in our hearts, there will be limitation, bondage and an absence of glory. It can be settled for ever that the real measure of glory and liberty and power is just in proportion to the revelation of Christ in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, not one bit more. There can be a kind of glorying in something which is seen with the mind, which is less than this glory revealed in the heart, and when the test comes, it is found that, after all, our glorying has been in an ideal, a conception, but not in a heart revelation of Christ. For everything this heart revelation is indispensable if it is to stand the test and carry us right through, but once we get it we have got the root of the matter in us, and we shall go right through.

When this heart condition is dealt with, when things have become inward by the opening of the heart to the Lord, then these other things must follow. The first of which is

### **The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**

That appears to be a very prosaic, a very ordinary statement. Is there not some element of challenge about a statement like that? Although for a good many years I have known the Lord in quite a real way, and have been learning something of the Lord, yet at the present time, after all these years, I feel that I am only just beginning to see the Lord. The revelation of the Lord Jesus in the heart is something which makes you feel that all that has gone before, however much of revelation it may have been, is nothing in comparison with that which we are seeing now. And although today you may be glorying in something which seems to eclipse all else and make it as though it were not, perhaps in a week hence you will feel that what you knew a week ago is nothing. Today we are seeing something of the meaning of the Man in the glory which makes us feel that we have never known anything about Christ.

We shall see something more in a week or two in our hearts which will make us feel that even today's revelation is as nothing. With it there is power; that is, the possession of strength, of power, of authority, becoming conscious that you have something back of you on which to work. It puts you in a very strong position.

That is the challenge of a very prosaic statement. "God hath shined in our hearts ...".

Is the shining going on? It is the test of everything for life and for ministry. That is *all* the difference between having the A and the Z of Christian revelation summed up in a system and presented objectively, to which you are working. That blessed reality, so wonderful that no one enjoys and understands it until they get it, and when they get it no one else in all the world knows anything about it! It may be that you have been preaching it to them for years, but when they have got it they will tell you that you have never known anything about it. That is the power of an inward revelation. It is something that liberates, that means life and glory. Life and service on that basis is fulness; the veil is taken away. Oh! to have the veil fully removed! Well, the very first thing is that we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and then we come into liberty.

## **Liberty**

The veil is taken away, the Lord is the Spirit, and "where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." What is this liberty? It is not in the letter but in the Spirit. "Now the Lord is the Spirit." The letter causes bondage. The truth may be presented, and you see it, wholly or in part, and then the terms, the very letters, the very form of the truth becomes an awful bondage to you, and you worry yourself to death because this thing is presented to you, and it has become imposed upon you but you are not living in it. It is the bondage to the letter. That is how the Jews lived for hundreds of years. "The letter killeth...". But turning to the Lord the veil is taken away, there is liberty; liberation from the killing power of the letter into the quickening power of the Spirit. Liberty from the bondage of the law, the bondage of the letter, liberty, therefore, from that barrier to real dwelling and abiding in the glory.

## **Access**

Those people in their state could never enter into the most holy place with the Lord. Moses could not enter into the presence of the Lord with a veil over his face. It was not only that it was unnecessary for him to do it, it

was not allowed that he should do so, because it represented a contradiction. It would speak of a denial, it would mean taking human limitation into the presence of God. That cannot be. When the Lord Jesus enters into the divine glory and remains, all that which represents the limitation of man's natural state has been put away, all barriers have been destroyed, the veil has been rent asunder, all that speaks of man being excluded has now been dealt with completely and finally. And until that has been finally dealt with there is no going in, but when it has been dealt with there is a going in. So that Moses would have been excluded from the divine presence with a veil over his face, because it was a symbol of a state which had not been dealt with inwardly. When he takes the veil away it is in virtue of the work of the cross, and he goes in.

So that, when Christ is revealed in our hearts and we apprehend Christ by the Holy Spirit as what He is on our behalf to the Father in full satisfaction, and what He is from the Father to us in meeting every need, then all the limitation of exclusion is removed, and we have access without fear. We can abide in the presence of the eternal glory without fear. It is a great thing to come with boldness to the throne of grace, with perfect confidence, absolute assurance that you are not going to meet your death in the presence of God. Bondage and limitation are removed in the taking away of the veil.

### **The absolute Lordship of Christ by the Spirit**

All this is based upon the absolute Lordship of Christ. Where the Spirit is Lord there is liberty. Here is Christ in the power of the Spirit reigning pre-eminent in the inward man. That is the secret of it all. It is the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ establishing His Lordship in our hearts; that is life, liberty and fulness. Oh, the great difference resultant from an inward knowledge of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ! The difference is between glory, liberty, love, power; and bondage, law, letter, fear. Perfect love casts out fear.

### **The inwardness of everything related to Christ**

The need in life and ministry is the inwardness of everything related to the Lord Jesus. The Lord is trying to bring to our hearts the realisation of this great need. How the Lord does need men and women of this inwardness! In every way it is essential, and in every way it makes possible the fulfilment of all the divine will in our lives. In the matter of helping others, in counsel, in comfort, in direction, there is all the difference between having to rush away

to your library to find out what to say to them, or to run off to someone else and ask them for advice as to how to help so-and-so, and knowing the Lord in your own heart and being able to help out of your own knowledge of the Lord. And in every other way it is the Lord's desire to have men and women with whom the whole thing is an inward reality, so that they are not always full of questions, and they can never be helpful to others because they have so many questions of their own. They never really do move out into complete liberty of life and ministry, because they are limited and in bondage by their own uncertainty, their own doubt; they are not clear themselves.

Why should that be? I suppose there may never be a time when we are absolutely free from needing to know some more, that is, free from some questions. But it is one thing to be ourselves before the Lord continually in an enquiring state, and it is quite another thing to be before men full of uncertainties and doubts and questions. The Lord's desire is that we should have it in ourselves to be able to meet needs, to know Him in a growing way in ourselves. It is a great thing to be in that position so that the Lord can put you down in any place in this world, without any external helps of any kind, and count upon you there, because you know Him. That is responsibility. It is so different from being in the place where immediately something arises, off you go to someone else to see what they think about it, what you ought to do, or what their interpretation is. We are but touching a mere fragment of it, but by way of illuminating the whole.

It is quite possible — so possible that it has become actual in a far more general and almost universal reality — that Christianity today has taken the place which Judaism occupied. Judaism was a system entirely composed of external and objective things relative to God, and Christianity has become that in an almost universal way today. It is the unusual — almost the rare — thing today to find among Christians those who really do know the Lord independently of a religious system. It is unusual to find Christians, wherever they are in the world, who know the Lord sufficiently well, and have a walk with Him in the power of His Spirit sufficiently full, to constitute them the Lord's representatives anywhere.

The Lord must have that, and He is after that, and that is what He is saying to us, and would have us exercised along that line, to seek very much that we be in the place where it is not the outwardness of the truth, but the inwardness of the revelation of Christ the Lord, the Spirit.

*To be continued.*