



the
Golden
Candlestick

THE GOINGS OF GOD
THE GOVERNING CONCEPTS
OF THE DIVINE REVELATION

Part 2

DEPTH

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CHAPTER THREE (CONTINUED)

The Lord Jesus is in the goings of God. Those goings of God are to issue in the glorifying of humanity. That course of the divine goings is based upon the indwelling divine nature, and the process is the development of that divine nature over against everything that is contrary to it, and the Lord is fighting that battle through to the end. Suggestions, entreaties, appeals, arguments, sufferings, sorrows, treacheries, everything that you can think of to try and turn Him out of that way of the goings of God, and at last He reaches the peak, the Mount of Transfiguration, and the voice which said at the beginning of that way, “My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17), at the end of that way says, “This is My beloved Son”, still undeviating, unfaltering, still “I am well-pleased”, and He glorifies Him there as representative. And then He comes down to bring you and me into that.

That leads to the next point in the ways of God. The incarnation is just for that, to relate Himself to man, to take man’s course through the grace of God, and by the divine nature to be conformed, perfected in some mysterious way in His case, perfected into the divine likeness in order to be crowned with the divine glory. That is our history and He worked out our history in His own Person. Surely this is the heart of the incarnation and the very explanation of those words — He “became flesh, and tabernacled among us” (John 1:14), and when He did, so far from being an isolated incident in the Bethlehem stable, it was the thing most exposed to the whole universe and all the universe was interested and taking knowledge. Angels in a mighty host took account of it, heaven looked on and joined in. Man, wise and unlearned, rich and poor, gathered round in wonder, interested in this, related in a representative way to this. Hell was also interested; hell rose up through Herod as it has never risen up against anything that pointed towards this One, whether it be a Moses or any other. The seed royal was ever the object of Satan’s hatred, and here He is, and so hell converges for His destruction. I say, He is the centre of the universe in the incarnation. You may follow right through and it is just like that. Heaven is constantly ministering, coming into the situation. Hell is constantly rising up, all men are gathering round, all nature joins in, the sun hides its face and a mighty earthquake takes place. This is no ordinary one; this relates to the whole purpose of God in man. That is all we can say at present about the incarnation.

It reaches right back to the eternal counsels of God in creation, why God created man. You see that incarnation glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration. That explains why God created any man. That is the explanation

of the creation. It reaches right back there and it reaches right on to the end. It explains the New Testament between the book of the Acts and the book of the Revelation. It explains all that is being said there about our spiritual nature and our spiritual course of conformity to the image of God's Son, our going on to full-growth and our sanctification. And then it explains the book of the Revelation. If you take this very thought into the book of the Revelation, it will be the key to that book. Here He is, this One, now risen and triumphant in His heavenly glory, presented in the first chapter with all His excellencies, and then He accuses the churches before Him and says, in effect, I am not a bit concerned about how much work you are doing for Me, about your standards of right and wrong, about this and that and the other thing which seem to concern you so much. I am concerned about how you stand in the light of God's true purpose — conformity to the image of His Son, that which is to be glorified as the outworking and consummation of an indwelling divine nature.

So He begins with Ephesus. "Thou hast left thy first love." "God is love." Pursue it right through. You touch on very horrible things of which God says, "which thing I hate". There are various degrees and measures and standards, but the one thing is this One presented as the full fruit of God's work and how do you stand in the light of that? The churches have got to measure up to Christ, not to creeds, not to standards of good and bad, but Christ, and Christ glorified. Have you gone on? Is the divine nature working in you? Are you being continually conformed to the divine image? That is the challenge.

When He has dealt with the churches, He moves out to deal with the nations and it is all on the basis of the divine goal and object. And the end in the symbolic form, this corporate man in Christ, is presented as the city. "And he ... showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (Rev. 21:10-11). You have your man glorified in a collective way, and I am very impressed as we come to the end there with the way in which two words are used. It says in verse 3: "And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them"; a little further on (v.22) it says, "And I saw no temple therein." At a first glance, I wondered, what is this? Is this a contradiction? Then I looked closely and I saw the difference of words in the original. Tabernacle, the general place of God's dwelling; the temple, the inner sanctuary, and the Lamb is the sanctuary and He is in the midst of the tabernacle. The Lamb is the sanctuary and the church is the tabernacle. The New Jerusalem has come down and the voice

says, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men”; the church as the general dwelling place and the Lamb as the inner sanctuary. God has reached His end; it is all glory. A glorified church with the glory of God. To put that in the other terms — humanity perfected into Christ, or, God’s end realised. And you know with the change of the symbolism, it is presented to Him as a bride, a wife, a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. 5:27). Well, that can stand to embody the two points of the incarnation and redemption.

Redemption

If we were to go on further with this third way of God’s movements and of His goings — redemption — we would simply say this, then you come to look closely at the whole matter of redemption, it is gathered up into a fragment — “redeemed us to God” (Rev. 5:9 AV). Redemption is so often preached as something unto man, for man. That is very good for us, but when you come to look at it from the standpoint of eternal counsel, God’s goings unto His own end, for His own glory, you have to look at it from another standpoint, from heaven’s standpoint, and see that redemption is *unto* God. “The redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph. 1:14, AV). It is unto God, and if you look, you will see that that principle is very closely adhered to by the Holy Spirit throughout; even in the smallest details things do not err, in a parable like the prodigal, the Lord Jesus does not err in doctrine when He tells a simple story. When He makes that prodigal begin to talk about what he has done, He makes him say, “Father, I have sinned against heaven” (Luke 15:21). In the gospel as it is preached today the emphasis is upon the idea that you have sinned against yourself, come to the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved from the results of your own sin; it is personal. But Christ says it cuts across God’s purpose concerning His Son, it damages the inheritance, it is against *heaven*. And you follow it to its source, its root, and you find it is that sinister hand always against the throne, the hand of an evil one against heaven “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance” (Matt. 21:38). You see what lies behind — there is a hand against the throne, the inheritance of the Son. Therefore, “I have sinned against heaven” and redemption is unto God.

It commences with man where the necessity first commenced; man is to be redeemed. It ends with the whole creation. That is the substance of the latter half of Romans 8. It has been dealing with the redemption of man up to then; now the creation itself is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, but when shall that be? When the manifestation of the sons of God

takes place. The redeemed ones in glory, the securing of that whole glorified manhood in Christ is the signal for the redemption of the whole creation from its corruption unto God to be the inheritance of His Son.

We must point out that redemption is always by blood. Why? Because the blood is the nature and the life. His blood is incorruptible Blood, therefore it is the symbol of an incorruptible, age-abiding life, and redemption is that — unto God back to the nature of God, back to the life of God, and then capable of being glorified and it will be a glorious creation. Everything will be glorious. After all, the whole universe is a moral issue. Satan is a moral issue. That is, you have got to deal with the moral or the immoral elements in this universe and they were dealt with in the cross, and, having the very basis of his strength taken from him, the prince of this world is cast out and has nothing.

Incorporation

There remains a little word to be said on the fourth of God's ways: His way in incorporation. Remember that the goal of all the divine goings is to sum up all things in Christ, that eventually all the universe shall be centred in Him, take its character from Him and be His God-given inheritance, a glorified inheritance, a universe filled with divine glory towards which God is moving in many ways, by many means, but surely, steadily moving. His purpose is fixed and unalterable and, getting to the point of the redemption of man, there immediately arises this matter of incorporation into the Man, the risen, ascended and glorified Man.

When we speak about incorporation, it is as well just to pause and think what we mean. It is just making a part of the body corporate, constituting anew a part of something already existing. When in business we speak of incorporating one thing into another, it means that the one thing becomes lost in the other and loses its own separate identity and character and all that belonged to it as something of itself. It is swallowed up and becomes part of something else, and that is incorporating. Here Christ is that into which we, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, become incorporated. We lose our own life in His, we lose our own separateness in Him, we lose everything that constitutes us as something in ourselves in all that He is. That is what incorporation means, and in this case it is not just an external business transaction; it is an inward organic thing. It is even something more than grafting. A great deal has been done in the surgical world about grafting, but even then I do not think the simile is good enough for this, for here there is a planting right into the springs of Christ and a growing up into Him in all

things as out from the very root, not putting on something from the outside at all. A lot of people think that to become a Christian you join something, you become a part of something, but that is not it at all. Incorporation is something very much more inward and organic than that. You are planted right into Christ and in Him as the very root, and you grow out of Christ and grow up in Christ. So that incorporation is just to make us a part of one Body, the Body corporate.

Now from what does incarnation take its necessity and its occasion? The occasion for incorporation into Christ is because we are not the direct seed of an unfallen Adam. If Adam had not fallen but had gone on in development, perhaps unto the point of glorification, and we had been the seed of that Adam, the whole point of incorporation would not arise. But we are not. We are the seed of a *fallen* Adam and we have therefore got to be incorporated into One who is altogether another. We have to be put into another. The last Adam, Christ, is so altogether other than the first Adam, that the two cannot live together. Any attempt to make them live together is an existence of misery and contention, and we know that in our own very being. Since Christ has come, there is warfare wherever the old Adam gets up. It is a miserable existence until he has really been brought well under. These two are never intended to live together in one human body, and so we are led to the very well-known truth that Christ being another, so completely and utterly, must bring us from the one to Himself. We have got to be delivered out of the one and there is no deliverance out of Adam number one, except by death. You just cannot do this thing from the outside. There is no process known to God or man now by which we can be made according to Christ except by beginning all over again, a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Thus it is necessary for us to be taken from one kindred and race and everything that belongs thereto, and made a corporate part of an altogether other and different race of which Christ is the first and the last Adam, but the first of another creation and race. This can only be done by dying and being brought to an altogether new beginning by a life which was never possessed before, a different life. That takes us back to the incarnation and the inheritance and the divine nature.

So it comes about as we know so well from the classic passage on this matter, Romans 6, that incorporation into Christ is first by recognising that His death was our death. Yes, our sins, but also the body of sin. *We* died, *we* were planted in the likeness of His death, together with Him, that “like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4), raised together with Him by the operation of God.

I am not intending to speak about identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection as a subject now, but just to point out that this is one of God's ways in which He is going towards His end. It is a part of God's goings and you will never reach that glorious end and become a part of that glorious Body until you know very truly the meaning of union with Christ in death, and the application of that continuously as a law and a principle. On the other hand, we must know union with Christ in resurrection, for God help the man or woman who seeks to know union with Christ in resurrection by constantly trying to crucify themselves. It is the wrong way round. You will only put to death the doings of the flesh as you know the power of His resurrection. You have no vantage ground whatever over Adam until you are on resurrection ground in Christ. So the apostle does not leave us halfway in this matter. When he says, "Reckon ye ... yourselves to be dead unto sin", he also says "but alive unto God" (Rom. 6:11), and if you are constantly trying to work out that reckoning of yourself dead without the vantage ground of reckoning yourself alive unto God in Christ, you will be a very miserable person indeed.

Incorporation into Christ does, then, bring us to a position of power, of advantage over the enemy within.

That is all I am going to say just now on the matter of incorporation. This is a fixed way in the eternal goings of God. There is no getting on, no going on with the Lord, no going on of the Lord with us except by coming to that point of incorporation into Him and being taken down figuratively and representatively by Him, as in Him, into a death which He died once for all, and then being raised in Him to a life which is once for all, that is, for ever. There is no way towards God's end except that way.

THE SOVEREIGNTY AND GOVERNMENT: UNCHALLENGEABLE AND INEXORABLE

We pass now to the next matter in the ways of God: His sovereignty and government. That sovereignty and government are unchallengeable and inexorable.

God's sovereignty and government cannot be challenged. It is a way that God is taking and you cannot challenge Him; you dare not question His sovereign right to take that way. It is unchallengeable; in the end perfectly vindicated as being right. Now, there is quite a lot said about it in the Word of God, but it would take a whole conference to deal with it. Something like that comes up in connection with the potter and the clay. The clay must not challenge the potter — "Why didst thou make me thus?" (Rom. 9:20). God is acting sovereignly, and He must not be challenged.

And His government and sovereignty are inexorable. That is, get in the way and see what happens. It is a terrible thing to get in the way of God! Many have found it an awful thing to get in the way of God. He is going; you, nor I, nor any other combination of forces in this universe can frustrate Him. He will work and none shall hinder, and if any get in the way... You remember Stephenson and his railway engine. It was a poor specimen compared with our model locomotive; you would hardly think it had any power in it at all, but the influential, scientific critics said to Stephenson, "But supposing a cow got on the line?!" So much the worse for the cow! said Stephenson. Yes, to get in God's way is not to gain anything.

It is good to be in the goings of God; they are sovereign, unchallengeable, inexorable. It may often seem that God is being frustrated and held up; it may seem that we are not getting through, but the story is not complete! If we really knew what God is shearing and ploughing through in His sovereignty, we would see a tremendous thing is happening.

The great inclusive example is Christ Himself in His cross. All the evil, inimical forces in this universe have combined and conspired to compass Him about, to overwhelm Him, to press Him down. The prophetic words of the Psalmist are slightly indicative of it. "They compassed me about like bees" (Psa. 118:12). Paul in the letter to the Colossians tells us what that meant spiritually. "Having put off from Himself the principalities and powers" (Col. 2:15). Paul's idea of principalities and powers is very far-reaching.

He goes beyond the heads of the evil hierarchy and finishes with hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12). Yes, the heavens are full of these evil forces, and when that One hung upon the tree, they said, ‘We have got Him now! Let us crush Him out now!’ They determined that this was the end of Him. So He knew in His spirit this awful darkness, swamping, overwhelming. “All thy waves and thy billows are gone over Me” (Psa. 42:7). What an experience it must have been in the soul of our Lord, but “I will cut them off” (Psa. 118:12). He stripped off principalities and powers. And Paul says, “He raised Him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named” (Eph. 1:20-21). He sheared clean through. God did a tremendous thing in raising Him from the dead. Exercising the exceeding greatness of His power, He cleft open all the hostility in His universe and made a way for His Son right through. The point is, God’s goings are like that.

It is a good thing to be with God. We may have our discipline, our painful experiences, we may suffer awful frustration, but the story is not all told yet, and it is marvellous that we have gone on at all. In view of all that we have had to encounter, and in view of all that has determined to bring us to an end, it is marvellous that we have gone on. God is doing something which, in the end, will be seen to be very wonderful, and it will be proved that anything or anyone getting in the way of the goings of God and therefore in the way of those who are in the train of His goings will have a poor time. They, indeed, will suffer disaster. It is tremendously important to be with God in what *He* is doing, not what we think He ought to do or what we would like to do for Him, not in our interpretations of what God would do, but in what God is doing.

Now you see, this sovereignty and government is a tremendous thing. We could start from the beginning of the Bible and see it working all through, but the very fact of it is shown in the way in which God so often makes very doubtful instruments serve glorious purposes. Listen to this. “The Most High ... Him that liveth for ever ... His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom from generation to generation; and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan. 4:34-35). The channel of that inspiration was a very doubtful one — it was Nebuchadnezzar. Now think about it, think about this man who stood right in the way of God’s interests concerning His Son. Nebuchadnezzar was no ally, and yet God forced through the lips of that man perhaps one of the greatest statements about His

sovereignty that has ever been expressed in the Bible.

There are a lot of things like that. There have been times when I have paused in reading a certain Scripture which was very sublime, very beautiful, and said, I wonder if that is inspired? — because of the person who uttered it. But here you are.

Think of Balaam. What is your opinion of Balaam? You have not much respect for Balaam. You know what is said about him: “He loved the hire of wrong-doing” (2 Pet. 2:15) — a contemptible, despicable person, but few more sublime things have ever come to us than those which came through the mouth of Balaam. “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob” (Num. 23:21), and the rest. A very doubtful messenger of divine truth, but the truth is there; it is divine truth all the same. That is the sovereignty of God. He will make His very enemies to tell His praises, His glories, His excellencies and convey to His people for all time His divine treasures. When Balaam said, “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob”, he gave expression to the gospel of the grace of God. Sovereign grace preached by Balaam! That is sovereignty. Sovereign grace coming by the sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God using an unintending instrument, one really set against God’s interests. And in Nebuchadnezzar again, here comes out the great declaration and testimony to the sovereign control of God in heaven and on earth.

And what about Job’s friends? There are some sublime things in the book of Job; they are grand, but dare I take them as from God? But I see that it is all of a piece with this sovereignty. It was one of Job’s friends, one of his critics, who said, “Lay thou thy treasure in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks; and the Almighty will be thy treasure, and precious silver unto thee” (Job 22:24-25). God uses such a preacher to preach sovereign compensation. It is a great truth. “Every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life” (Matt. 19:29). God will see to it and will keep the balances even. His sovereignty holds those balances, and He will be debtor to no man. Sovereign compensation is preached by a friend of Job.

And what shall we say of Caiaphas? Well, the least said about him the better, excepting this, that he, being High Priest that year, prophesied that one should die for the people (John 11:50,51). He did not mean to; he was forced to. Sovereignty was at work to secure atonement for all by One, and Caiaphas was the preacher of it, a doubtful preacher, seeing he is the first preacher of the atonement in the New Testament. But all these are examples of how God is going on His way sovereignly governing, and He is doing it not only in spite of opposition, but by means of it.

We come back to Psalm 68 from which our title — ‘The Goings of God’ — is taken. There is a little fragment in that Psalm which is taken by Paul and quoted in Eph 4:8: “When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men”; and in the Psalm — “among the rebellious also” (v.18). Paul takes hold of that, and he transfers it, and brings it into its right place in the goings of God, the goings of God in the ascension of the Lord Jesus, the raising of Him to His own right hand and he sees a mental picture of a thing familiar in campaigns in his time. A victorious general has overwhelmed his enemies, has made them bow, and then his enemies hand over to him a present of men who were leaders of the rebellion, they make him a present of men, “the rebellious also”. And Paul says — and you know that this is not an isolated instance of Paul’s thought about this matter — when He ascended up on high He gave a present of men and the rebellious — and I was also one of those rebellious ones. Saul of Tarsus is among “the rebellious also”, but he is in the captivity which is led captive, and firstly given to the victorious Lord and then given by the victorious Lord to the church. “And he gave some apostles ...” — a glorious picture. But see the sovereignty of God. Here is Saul of Tarsus very much among the rebellious, no one more so than he, and then that sovereignty stoops down from the heavens and catches him on the Damascus road and lays hands on him and arrests him. He leads him captive, and then He gives Him to the church as one of the apostles. Marvelous sovereignty, not only in the act of apprehending, but the sovereignty which turns a once fierce enemy to serve the very ends which he at one time sought to frustrate. No one has served more fully ends which once were the object of his destructive hatred than the apostle Paul. But that is sovereignty.

In smaller, lesser ways, that is true of us. We could go on like that through the Bible. It is very wonderful. We can see it on the other side. Herod gets in God’s way and we know what happens to him. The sovereignty is going on; it is unchallengeable, inexorable.

I think I must finish there for the moment. We go back to remind ourselves what we have said. God has fixed a goal; He fixed it before times eternal. That goal is that all things shall be summed up in Christ and that He shall fill all things; that God is going sovereignly, inexorably, towards that end. Is that goal the dearest thing to our hearts? Is Christ all and in all not just a beautiful Christian ideal but in the practical matters of everyday life? If you want the sovereignty of God on your side, that is the way to have it. If we really do want God as our ally (that is the wrong way to put it) but if we want to have God committing Himself to us, the way for that is to have no other object, thought or care but that in all things He, God’s Son, shall have the pre-eminence. God can do wonderful things when He gets us there. We have

our little controversies with the Lord. We sometimes get held up because this thing is making too deep an inroad into this life here. It is not always easy to hand over to the Lord and say, "Have Thine own way, Lord." We do come up against the cost, then our battle takes place, and we win through, and then we find God floods in in a new way and on we go and we find that God is with us. Well, it comes down to very practical, simple details of life. The whole which applies to the vast circle of the universe touches you and me in this issue and that issue, as to whether the Lord Jesus is going to be all, dividing nothing, all and in all. That is the way to find the power of God at work; it is the life which is utter for Christ that finds God utter for it. In the long run it will have proved to have been so, although, as we may see before we have finished, there are often mysteries and hiddennesses in God's ways, but the end is sure. We shall find that, although it did seem sometimes that we were getting through with difficulty, God was doing something tremendous, far bigger than we ever knew. God was overcoming a lot; God was gaining much ground and deep ground; God was consolidating; He was going on. May He find us all one with Himself in His goings.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FEATURES

1. THE SPIRIT

The first of the features of the goings of God and that which includes a number of things is the agency and activity of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. It is quite clearly seen by a casual glance at the Scriptures that the goings of God are committed to the Holy Spirit. Going back to that as the first of the ways of God in creation, you know that the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the deep, and it was to the Spirit of God that there was committed the subsequent work of bringing order out of chaos, light into darkness, life into death and everything else to constitute that ordered realm — the cosmos. You follow right the way through the Old Testament, and you find that in all the goings of God the symbols of the Holy Spirit as in charge, are present. It may be a cloud, symbolic of the Holy Spirit governing, controlling, ordering, leading in those goings. It may be the oil, it may be the water, it may be the fire, but there they are as active, energetic, controlling factors. It is the Holy Spirit who has this whole matter of God's movements in hand unto His

end. You come to the New Testament. You find that the Spirit is there in the very conception and birth of Him through whom and for whom all things were created. As He proceeds into His public ministry to work out the life and the redemption into which we are to be brought, it is under the agency and government of the Holy Spirit. When He goes to the cross and offers Himself, He offers Himself through the eternal Spirit; the energies of the Spirit are seeing the thing through. Then it is taken up in Christ corporate, the church. He is in charge of things in the book of the Acts, a marvellous, almost a romantic story, of Holy Spirit initiative and government. And you know what a large place the Holy Spirit has in the consummations. “What the Spirit says to the churches” — reiterated seven times at the beginning of the Revelation, and so the whole glorious story finishes — “The Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Rev. 22:17).

It is quite clear by that hurried glance at the whole Bible that the goings of God are in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Thank God for that! We have only to be in the hands of the Holy Spirit and we shall be in the goings of God. Herein again lies the immense importance of Spirit-governed and dominated lives and churches and the church to reach God’s end.

a) Life

But that is inclusive. The Holy Spirit has to be interpreted in several ways. The Spirit, firstly, is the Spirit of life. Whatever is of and in the goings of God will be predominantly characterised by life. That is a test as well as a statement of fact. Whatever is in the goings of God will be pre-eminently characterised by life. We are, of course, thinking of Ezekiel, the goings to which we referred in those seven fragments in the first chapter of his prophecies. The wheels going — forward, the onward movement of God’s counsels and purpose. But it says that the Spirit of life was in the wheels; the Spirit of the living ones was in the wheels. Ezekiel begins with life: life in the purposes, life in the counsels, life in the goings. And Ezekiel almost ends with life in fulness, a mighty river, mopping up death as it goes, countering death on its whole course. The characteristic of the Spirit is life, and that life is spontaneous, for life, if it is true life, is always spontaneous. It is life that overcomes all the difficulties, that answers all the questions. There are not many questions to answer, not many real problems to solve, if life is abundant and overflowing. You have no questions if life is just welling up and overflowing. At any rate, you don’t bother about them, or they don’t bother about you! If a church is in the full stream of life, most of its problems are solved. It is life which is productive, which is fruitful. You never have to

appeal for aid of any kind and go to work to raise assistance of any nature where true spiritual life is in fulness. You do not have to mention money or anything else where there is spiritual life; it solves all your problems. Life is God's key to His eternal purpose so that whereas Genesis brings the tree of life into view, Revelation sees that tree right at the centre of the city and the river flowing from beneath the very tree, flowing on and flowing out and bringing life everywhere. It is God's way of solving problems, getting over difficulties and reaching His end. It is spontaneous. You do not have to do anything to produce it; it just happens. When God has His conditions, it is there. Life is a spontaneous thing in the Holy Spirit.

An energetic life

Life is a tremendously energetic thing. The Spirit of the Lord is tremendously energetic. No one who is really governed by the Spirit will be indolent. There are no such beings as Holy Spirit filled lazy people. When the Spirit of life is there, you are always abounding in the work of the Lord. You abound when life abounds, for the Spirit of life is so energetic. And that is not only a statement of truth. You will be able to do ten times more by the energy of divine life than you would do naturally. It is a wonderful story of increased and multiplied activity because of divine life transcending our natural life. Yes, our physical problems can be solved, our temporal problems can be solved, and God has the key. It is just a matter of the Spirit of life. God's goings are like that.

They are above the level of this earth. I pointed out earlier that the wheels of Ezekiel 1, when they go, are lifted up from the earth. They are transcending that deadly earth touch, for the nearer you get to this earth, the slower is your progress; the more you get away from the earth, the more you will get away from the retarding effect of something that lies under the curse. This life knows nothing of the curse, it is incorruptible. It is death-overcoming life, and it is lifted up from the earth, and that is something for personal as well as collective spiritual experience, to be lifted up by this life above those arresting, retarding and limiting influences of the old earth life. The Lord's people should know more about the solving of these problems down here simply by the Spirit of life. How often we use the word 'impossible' because of the circumstances. Well, let us think again. It is marvellous how the impossibility is overcome by divine energy; impossibilities in ourselves and in situations, what the Lord requires beyond ourselves; what the Spirit of life has done and does do and can do! It is tremendously energetic.

We have often pointed out that Joshua is the type of the energies of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is represented by that man with the drawn

sword. Joshua capitulates to Him and capitulates everything to Him. He takes his shoes from his feet and bows himself. In effect, he says, I put everything into your hands! Then you see that divine energy at work through Joshua, and what achievements, what goings, they are!

A holy life

This Spirit of life is a holy life because it is the *Holy* Spirit. The goings of God are always related to holiness, or holiness related to them. The Spirit of God will not go on when there is unholiness: He cannot. If He does, He will leave us behind; He will not work with anything that is unholy. You know how large a place that has in Ezekiel's prophecies, how, when the house, the final glorious thing, is brought into view, as the embodiment of all the others, of life, the whole law of the house is holiness (Ezek. 43:12). Reaching the end, it is an end in holiness. It is a matter for exercise, for this Spirit of life is a holy life. You cannot get away with it. If there is a controversy with the Lord on something that is not holy, you just stay until that is put right. It is necessary to say that when you are talking about life, because life does not operate and go on willy-nilly. It does not reach God's end anyhow: it stipulates that its nature must rule, and its nature is holiness.

An eternal life

The Spirit of life is an age-abiding or eternal life, and whatever is done by the Spirit of life, though its vessel and its form may pass, that abides for ever. Our outward man may be perishing, we as vessels and instruments of the Lord's purpose unto His end may pass with time, but, while the Spirit of God is operating through us, there is something going up to heaven all the time which will appear again, for "everything God does will remain for ever" (Eccl. 3:14), and the secret of His doing is that it is life, eternal, age-abiding. It is a good thing to be in a work which shall never die, to be in goings which shall never come to an end, which shall expand throughout the ages of the ages. It is good to be in that; with all changes and all transientness, to know that it is not in vain in the Lord. Why? Because Christ is risen, says the apostle, and we are given the victory over death. "Thanks be unto God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:57,58), because they are the labours of a life which is age-abiding. Be quite sure that your labours are not yours, but the labours of the Holy Spirit; be quite sure that you are not in goings which you have conceived for God, but in the goings which are God's own goings.

We have the great example of this in Ezekiel, but the fullest and highest example in Christ Himself. Was He in the goings of God? Was He in the energies of God? Was He in the life of God? Well, we know those were the things which characterised Him. Was that true of the church His Body, Christ corporate? Well, we read again, and we see there is no doubt about it, it is spontaneous there, it is mightily energetic there; yes, it is holy there, as Ananias and Sapphira discovered when this holy life met unholiness with a terrible challenge. There at the beginning something was done which has stayed out the age and is staying it out; it does not perish — we derive so much of our own inspiration from what happened then. Life which came at the beginning is age-abiding.

b) Intelligence

The second feature of the Spirit is spiritual intelligence. Coming to Ezekiel again, there you have the wheels and the living ones, and coming to Revelation where those living ones are again brought into view (it is a testimony of life, you see), we are told that they are full of eyes within and without. The Spirit of life is in them full of eyes — it is symbolism, but we can surely see what it symbolises. Where the Spirit of life is, the Holy Spirit, there is not just a dull, blank, unintelligent drifting on. His work is to bring about spiritual intelligence and understanding: He knows all things. So the apostle says in Romans 8, he knows the will of God, the mind of the Spirit. The sons of God are led by the Spirit of God, they come into that intelligence as to the goings of God. The goings of God are not blind goings; they are all-knowing, all-wise, all-understanding, and the characteristic of those who are moving with God ought to be an increasing understanding of the ways of God, the thoughts of God, and so it will be if we forsake our own ways, the ways of our own thinking, reasoning, willing and desiring, and completely capitulate to the Spirit of God. The result will be increasing spiritual understanding and intelligence in our relationship to God and His ways and goings.

c) Liberty

Further, a feature of the goings of the Spirit is liberty. The statement is “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17). The context of that bears out what I am saying, without my referring to it, but I do want to make a very special stress upon this, that the Holy Spirit, in order to take us on in the goings of God to ever fuller realization of His objective, demands absolute freedom of movement, and the church has not gone on in the goings

of God because it has put limitations upon God. It has put a harness on God and in effect has told the Holy Spirit that He must run in the church's harness. You can see this everywhere, and as soon as God moves by His Spirit spontaneously men begin to make committees and draw up rules and regulations for the movement, and it is not long before you have principles and practices, and in the long run there is the death of the whole thing. God is not free to go on beyond that. It is the story of arrest after arrest: putting the harness of our organisation and our crystallised movements upon the Holy Spirit so that He is not free; yes, and our systematized doctrine, which may be true, but it is formed into a system. God is not free to break forth more light and truth from His unfathomable Word because if He did, He would be told, 'We are bound up with what we have been taught, what we have been brought up to believe', and many there be who cannot move beyond that. I am not saying that anything that God will do will contradict earlier truth, but it will move far ahead of it, and the Holy Spirit must have liberty to take us on. When the Spirit has liberty, things can go on and increase. The Spirit demands that.

Here is Peter between Pentecost and Caesarea — two halves of Pentecost, the Spirit moving, and right in between Peter has his little altercation with the Lord about the unclean things he had never eaten. My tradition forbids the Holy Spirit to do what He wants to do and *my interpretation* of the word of God, of Leviticus 11, forbids the Holy Spirit to do this. God has His own interpretation and He must be free to apply it. There may be a lot of undoing to be done before the Spirit can go on, but when Peter got over that traditional difficulty and by the leading of the Spirit arrived at Caesarea, see what happened. As he spoke, the Spirit fell upon all that heard the word. The Spirit is getting on with it. In the book of Acts the Spirit is all the time going on doing marvellous, unexpected or untraditional things. He is breaking down all the standards of human argument and reasoning, and going on, and He does go on wherever He finds freedom. How extraordinary are some of the movements of the Spirit in that book of Acts; how they contradict all men's reasonings. The Spirit spoke to Philip in Samaria, in the midst of that tremendous movement, many turning to the Lord, and told him to leave the whole thing and go to a desert. That is contrary to all common sense, all the best reasoning. But the Spirit had His way with Philip, and took him down there. It is like that all the time. The Spirit is simply coming here and saying I am going on; are you coming? Are you going to let me have free course, are you going to put aside all that which you have conceived and going to let Me have My way? The goings of God by His Spirit demand absolute liberty, and if any of you are tied up with a tradition, with a past, with anything fixed, even though it might be of God, and it has brought you to a limit, you know

that there is something wrong with that, something wrong with the effect of it. The thing may be true, but the effect of it is never intended to bring you to a limit. It is only intended to bring you to the next thing. A movement by the Spirit of God will never become static and stagnant. It will be on the move all the time. The Spirit demands liberty; He will not be fixed. If He is put into watertight compartments, He will just leave the whole thing and go off somewhere else. That is what life does. At the end of that vision of the river in Ezekiel we read that the miry places were salt; these are the regions which resist the life; they stay out there in desolation. But the river goes on.

2. THE MYSTERY

Secondly, as to the features — the mystery factor about the goings of God. There is a great deal of mystery in the goings of God, so much so that you often wonder if there are any goings at all. The goings are so much underground, but let them be underground! It is like the swimmer who sees an object far out on the water and he dives and he disappears and everybody waits and waits — it seems like an eternity waiting. Is he lost? Has he gone for ever? What is happening? An awful fear grips the heart. Then he comes up right against the object. Ah, he is there! God is like that so often in His ways. He is after an object in our lives, but He very often goes down beneath the surface and His progress towards that object seems to be entirely obscured. We cannot trace it, but be sure He will reach the object.

Those very cherubim of Ezekiel 1 and elsewhere have that element of mystery in them. There is the eagle feature of the cherubim — heavenly mystery. You see it in Christ, the mystery in Christ. Well, look at Christ on the face of things. What are you going to make of it? You are not surprised that men said, “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” (Matt. 13:55). What is there here that is so extraordinary? Nothing at all — like everybody else. But you know the result of that life of the incarnation, the immense fact, the goal which God has reached. You say, there was something hidden when He moved about this earth. You could not see how God could possibly reach His end. Men could not see God in it at all. The “how” was hidden, but marvellous fulfilment was evident. I can only say this by way of indicating this essential element, feature, of the goings of God, that there is always mystery. We shall not always be able to understand what God is doing, There is much mystery in why He allows this and that. Oh, the “why’s” and the “how’s” which arise upon our lips because of the Lord’s mysterious ways. But mystery is an integral part of the goings of God. “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons” (Deut. 29:29). He

does veil His things in mystery. Because we do not understand and we cannot trace it, does not mean that nothing is happening. Surely we have enough experience to prove that. To look at the history of the goings of God during the ages — how mysterious were those goings at the time, but how glorious was the consummation, how glorious in the end was the revelation that He had been surely going, moving to an end.

3. THE SUFFERING AND SACRIFICE

Finally, the goings of God are fraught with suffering and sacrifice. The law of travail was introduced immediately men sinned, but — and this is the most difficult thing of all things for you and me to accept or believe — the law of travail was intended by God to be a beneficent thing, a very good thing. Suffering, sacrifice — you can trace those things in the goings of God; right down through the ages they are there. When you see those goings gathered up consummately in the Son of His love, you see suffering and sacrifice brought to fulness. The church knows about that. What I am doing is not pointing out the obvious, but just reminding you that it is a part of the goings of God. How did the Lord reach that end in the life of His servant Paul, that end where His servant knew Him in terms of life triumphant over death, life which reverses the natural sentence that it was death. How did he come to that place where all the arguments of nature were proved to be false and unwarranted, where he made discoveries which transcended all such arguments? I am talking about the second letter to the Corinthians. How did he come to that glorious end of knowing God in that wonderful, nature-transcending way? Just through the deepest sufferings. It is the way by which God reaches His end. God was ‘going’ through that suffering. It is a long, comprehensive story of how God’s end is reached along the line of suffering and sacrifice. Let us be careful of our interpretation of these experiences. Do not think that because certain things obtain such as weakness, infirmity, suffering, adversity, trial, sorrow and affliction that there must necessarily be limitation, retarding of progress, and that our attainment must necessarily be held back because of this and that. The story is just the opposite! Right in the setting of deep infirmity and suffering, God does magnificent things and attains magnificent ends. You have to wonder and worship and say, that is of God! Look by what means and ways He obtained that end! You have nothing there that can argue for it in the realm of the natural, but everything that works against it, but God has done it. He goes on, through suffering, through affliction and through sacrifice to reach His end. The story of the goings of God is the story of suffering.

That is why at the end the whole thing is brought to fulness, life in fulness, glory in fulness. The gates are of pearl (Rev. 21:21). It is a story of coming into it all by the way of suffering. The pearl's history is a history of agony, we might call it, bloody agony. That is the way into all. There is the testimony lying behind those gates, a testimony in fulness, fulness of divine life, fulness of divine glory. It all lies behind the gates of suffering. But they are the ways of God, right in the goings of God.

On that note I think it would be good for us to conclude. We are helped a little by the value of vision. There is tremendous value in having a large enough vision, not being shut up to the little personal circle of our own lives, occupied with our own little problems, having things too near to us so that we do not get any perspective. It is good to have our eyes lifted up to see the great vision of God's movements, God's goings unto God's end. There is a tremendous value for life and service in adequate vision, and there is a tragic set of conditions because of no vision — all turning in on itself — no vision. I trust that the Lord will have made His word a means of renewing our vision or giving us new vision with all its value.

I trust that we shall not, after all, just see all this in an objective way, but realise the personal applications and considerations of it. All that greatness, that glorious purpose; it touches us right down here, just comes right down to our personal sufferings for Christ's sake. The meaning of your suffering, the content of your suffering is that — the sufferings and the glory which is to follow; suffering and glory linked together in the Word of God. It comes right down there. So may this closing word really help us as we go out and know what it costs, the price, what we are involved in in going on with God in His goings, and to realise all these things, this mighty sovereignty at work, this mighty energy operating, and all have been making our sufferings to serve the end, so that in the end we shall not complain that we suffered and sacrificed. We shall say, 'It was a right way by which He led us, this is a realisation which could not have been by any other way; we see it now!' May the Lord give us that assurance in our hearts.

Concluded.

DEPTH

“And others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away” (Matt. 13:5).

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out!” (Romans 11:33).

We immediately recognise that contrast; those three statements in the Matthew portion — “not much earth”, “no deepness of earth”, “no root”; and then “Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!”

I have it on my heart just to say a brief and simple word on this matter of depth. “Oh the depth ... !”

In this parable of our Lord, with which we are so familiar, called ‘the parable of the sower’, in this second phase of the sowing, and its result, the Lord puts his finger upon something that is nothing less than a tragedy, when the tremendous potentialities of the Word of God are remembered. You come to the end of the parable and you see in what way the Word was sown. It was no different Word sown among the thorns or on the rocky ground from that sown on good ground. In every case and instance, the potentialities were the same; mighty, wonderful things are possible from the Word of God in the heart. And yet, with all those great potentialities and possibilities, there is a receiving — it comes to them just as it came to the others — and all that was possible was missed.

The tragedy of shallowness

The tragedy of shallowness! What a tragedy. So the Lord puts His finger on that which is so contrary to His own nature and His own thought, so contrary to God. Oh, the depth of God! How deep God is! How deep God goes. Here perhaps there is a link with the present remembrance to what depth the Lord Jesus came down and went! How deep God has gone. ‘The breadth and the length and the height and the depth of the knowledge’ — surpassing love of God! How profound is the love of God! How deep God is! “The depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How

unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” That is God. That is his nature. And over against that is this tragic shallowness, contrary to Him, missing all that could have been.

Shallowness is always unsubstantial; it never stands the test and goes through. Always unenduring; for a time ... and then ... it has all gone. Always unprofitable; missing what God intended. Now you see, if God is like this, and if there is something in what the Lord Jesus says and meant in the parable, of condemnation, deploring such a state, what should we expect of God? We should expect nothing other than — if God really gets a chance, and has a way to His end — that He will go very deep, and He will take us very deep.

And it does prove to be like that. I am quite sure that there are many of us who know that that is true. It is a word not only that is true to experience, but it is a word that explains so much. The Psalmist cried: “Thy way was in the deep”! And it always is. God’s way is always in the deep! God will always seek to take us down into the depths in order that He might reproduce in us the things that are true of Himself. We have said just now that shallowness is that which is not substantial. Now the one thing that that Psalmist was always saying about the Lord was that He was ‘his Rock’. What a lot the Psalmist owed to the fact that he had discovered the Lord to be his Rock: something that could not be moved, could not be shaken; to be relied upon; to be dependable; always there — “Thou art my Rock!” That is the Lord.

The Lord wants to reproduce His character in us, to make us dependable, reliable, substantial; that we are there, and always there, and can always be found there — not moved! In order to do that, He has to take us into the depths. He is that Himself, because He is so deep. He is the eternal God; He abides for ever. There is a word that brings us right into touch with that: “He that does the will of God shall abide for ever.” We are easily moved away, unabiding! The Lord Jesus was ever stressing this: “Abide in me”, *abide*, keep settled down. And you don’t if you live on the surface, you know that quite well. Nothing that lives on the surface abides; it is carried away so easily by whatever comes along. It is only those who, to use the words of a prophet twice employed: “Dwell deep ... dwell deep ...”. Only so shall we endure and abide.

The things of greatest value are not found on the surface at all. The real treasures are in the deep. You have to go deep for the pearl and the jewels. The things that really are of value are not just superficial things found strewn anywhere and everywhere; you have to search deeply for them. When the Lord was describing the Land for His people, the Land of Promise, the Land of their inheritance, He told them that there were treasures there, but they

would have to dig for them: “Out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass”. Nothing that really is of value comes easily. Well, we know that is true in every sphere of life. The Lord, then, is always seeking to deepen; He is in quest of depth. And because of the importance to the Lord of all these features of depth, depth is always a costly thing. The fact is, and we know it so well, that we only make deeper discoveries of the Lord through very deep trial, very deep testing, very deep suffering. These treasures are “treasures of darkness”; there are always treasures somewhere in the darkness; there are always precious things somewhere down in the depths where the Lord leads us; it is like that. This essential of God in His people, all that it means of real depth, unto the abiding, and unto full fruitfulness, only comes by way of deep trial and suffering. That explains the ways of the Lord with us; we wonder why the Lord ploughs so deep, and does not allow us to abide in our superficiality.

Here is Paul, always a great example of every kind of divine truth and divine way and working and method. Here is this man, out of very deep ways with God, and God’s very deep way with him crying, “Oh the depth of the riches ... !” Oh the depth of the riches! How unsearchable! Past finding out! There is reality, though sometimes we think we have touched the bottom, there is nearly no touching bottom in this matter; there is always something more to discover, but also every time something more of deepening in us.

Now, the way of man and the way of the world is the shallow way. To get things as cheaply, as easily, and as quickly as possible, with as little cost as possible — that is the way of our nature. We want it like that, and we don’t like the other way. But that is a mark of a lack of divine character; it just shows how devoid of the character of God human nature is, and this world is. And all God’s ways of enrichment demand the countering of our natural desires, inclinations and propensities to have it all easy. That is our way; it is the way of man.

This matter of depth and of deepening into God and by God constitutes a feature of the great battle that the Lord’s people are always in. As an illustration and an instance of this, remember the Lord Jesus, as He stepped across that line from His thirty years of private, hidden life, into the public vocation and mission for which He had come, and the enemy clearly discerning with that intuition common to spirits, recognised quite well why He had come, and for what He had stepped across that line that day, to become the Lord of Creation, the Prince of this world, the Ruler of the kingdoms. Satan recognised that, and offered that prize to Him along superficial lines, compromise. “Take this easier way, and you can have it; you can have it all if you will only take this way that I suggest. You are going the hard way: you are going the

deep way; you are going the costly way; you can have it all without that.’ He suggested the superficial way for a kingdom. What a Kingdom it would have been! It would not have lasted; it would not have endured; it would not have been of that substantial order of eternity. And that is what the enemy wanted, to rob of that deep reality that God meant. And the Lord Jesus saw the snare and accepted the deep way — and oh, how deep it was! That way of the cross, to the very depths! But what a Kingdom! An everlasting kingdom; an enduring kingdom; He has it; it will endure throughout all generations, for ever and ever. The deep way is the real way. The enemy is always trying to rob of depth, that is the point; to make things easier. He is always trying to make things superficial; all so happy and pleasant; so nice, all on the surface; it all looks so lovely and enjoyable, and seems to be so good. But the point is: At what cost has it been secured? And is there a peril that something of the depth is being surrendered? For that is the realm of value and conflict — depth!

For this reason, and it is striking what I know sounds like a melancholy note, the Lord does have to bring His own things, His own divine, sacred things, into a realm of tremendous suffering, in order to preserve and increase their depth — make no mistake about it! The question will always arise: At what cost did you come by that? That determines whether it is real with you.

I was thinking much about that incident — and with this I will close — in the life of Elisha. We know and have heard many things about it. One thing has impressed me as I have been thinking over it again recently. When the Lord sent him to the woman, you remember, and the child was given by divine act. And the prophet went away; and it fell upon a day that the child was stricken and died. The woman asked her husband to saddle the ass for her to go and fetch the prophet, and off she went. She found him, told him her trouble, and he sent his servant Gehazi with his rod back. And I never can help my imagination from getting to work as I see Gehazi — a man for which I have the utmost contempt for all I know of him in the Scripture — taking that rod and ... in some professional, conceited way, going to the situation, and entering the death chamber, putting the rod upon the child and nothing happens. Perhaps Gehazi tries at some other angle, and still nothing happens. But the woman saw through Gehazi, and she said: I am not going with Gehazi; I am not going without you! *You* are to come; she had come to Elisha; he went. And you know how he entered in, and stretched himself upon that child, hands to his hands, eyes to his eyes, and lips to his lips. Now, you know the whole story, but what has impressed me is this: the Lord in this scene was sovereignly at work. The principle there undoubtedly, was this, that here in this child was represented the very fruit, meaning and value

of that woman's life. If you will allow her to represent the church, and the child, the very meaning of her life, the fruit of her life, the very testimony of her life; the only thing for which now she had to live; something that was a matter of life or death with her. And the Lord touched that, in order to bring out this great, wonderful and profound truth that everything in the church has got to become a matter of life and death. No play-acting by any Gehazi's; no merely formal, professional conduct with the rod; no mere words; no mere performances. Only the man, the man who is brought right into the thing in heart, so that this matter is with him a matter of his own ministry, his own life, his own testimony brought into the agony and the anguish of this thing. He is not standing aside like a Gehazi, and acting objectively, but this thing involves his very life, ministry, testimony and anointing. If God does not do this, then Elisha had better give up everything. He is brought into the agony and anguish of this situation. God has touched something that is not just a matter of his professional ministry, it is a matter of the justification of his life; he is brought into it like that. God is going deep. God does that, make no mistake about it.

In the church, that is, in the church that is according to God, God will touch something in the individual life. He may touch a husband; he may touch a wife; he may touch a child — a beloved child — in order to get us out of this merely formal, detached kind of association with His things, and make everything an agony. And if the church does not come in on our behalf now, well you see, the dearest thing in life is threatened. God has wonderful ways of making things real, of destroying superficiality. Do you follow? I feel it is a very solemn word from the Lord, but a word that we all need to recognise. The Lord is not going to have shallowness and superficiality; He is going to touch the depth until it is a matter of anguish. Everything is in the balances in this issue, whatever it may be — business situation or home situation, personal situation or church situation — everything is in the balances now, how this will go. And the Lord simply draws us in. And I have a feeling that the Lord is going to do things like that, to deviate from the matter-of-course kind of things in order to bring about a more deadly, solemn reality with us all. It will be by deep ways, but it will be worthwhile afterwards. That lad in the story of Elisha became the embodiment of the power of His resurrection. It is something, you know, to have that testimony enshrined and embodied, something indestructible and abiding; the power of His resurrection, who can undo that? That is for ever. But it comes by this way. “Thy way, O God was in the depths”; “Oh, the depths of the riches ... ” — that is the point — the riches. Listen to the word; it will explain things that are going to happen to you, perhaps soon! And it may be a saving word. (*Concluded*).