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**Golden  
Candlestick**

**THE CROSS AND HIGHER GROUND**

**Part 2**

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*Volume 137*



## THE CROSS AND THE HIGHER GROUND OF FELLOWSHIP

*Reading: Ezra 3:1-13; 1 Chron. 12:38-40; 1 Cor. 2:2; 3:1-5; 2 Cor. 5:14-17.*

We have already considered our subject along two lines, but what we are seeing is that the Lord has as His supreme thought for His people their occupying of the high places, to be with Him on high, an exalted people, an elevated people in a right and proper sense and that having been very fully revealed in His Word. As we approach the end time He will lay a new emphasis upon the matter of coming up higher, that the ascension, the rapture of the church must be hand in hand with a spiritual rising up, a spiritual ascendancy, a spiritual taking of higher positions in the Lord. The Lord would say to His people more and more strongly and definitely, "Come up to Me in the mount."

And so we want in some measure at least, to contemplate the higher ground to which the Lord would bring us, and in this chapter the word is in connection with the cross and the higher ground of fellowship. Before very long you and I and all the Lord's people have got to live together for all eternity at very close quarters. We had better get ready for it, and that represents high ground. Yes, very high ground spiritually and morally, and I am feeling so strongly for my own part, that we *must* take higher ground in the matter of fellowship. It is becoming absolutely imperative. If we do not, I do not know what is going to happen to us. We are going to be at sixes and sevens, marked by a great deal of weakness and defeat; our testimony is going to be bereft of power, and the full weight and impact of a corporate witness is going to be destroyed. One of the most essential things to the testimony of the Lord Jesus in the church which is His Body, is that the church should live on heavenly ground in the matter of fellowship. And when we read and so often quote the words, "in the heavenlies in Christ", we are very much in danger of getting into an abstract realm mentally, of interpreting the words and ideas as having some meaning of being in the clouds, being off the earth. We have not taken hold of those words and brought them right down to practical business in everyday life, living here on the earth in the heavenlies. How often we have pointed out that in that very letter which is so much occupied with the heavenlies, Ephesians, the Holy Spirit through the apostle brings in right at the heart of that letter the various rela-

tionships of the Lord's people here on the earth, husbands and wives, children and parents and masters and servants. This is not a sudden swoop down from the heavenlies to the earthlies. This is a relating of the two and showing that all these things which may be regarded as the commonplaces of life are to be lifted into a heavenly realm and are to be brought onto higher ground. They themselves will be the very means and occasion for defeat in the Lord's people unless they are brought onto higher ground.

### **Opposition to higher ground**

And so the matter of fellowship and of relationships must be brought onto higher ground for the testimony's sake. The low ground is always the devil's ground and it is always the ground which gives him the occasion for which he is looking to make havoc of the Lord's people and of the Lord's testimony as bound up with them. The one objective of the adversary is the destruction of fellowship amongst the Lord's people and of the Lord's Testimony as bound up with them. You have only to survey the whole course of things from the beginning to see that if there is one thing against which the enemy has moved with all the resources at his command, it has been with a diabolical persistence against the fellowship of God's people. The Lord has declared the minimum of His Testimony. You cannot divide one but you can divide two, one is unity, two is testimony, and the Lord begins with testimony always in two. He sent them forth two by two. "If two of you shall agree on earth ...". He begins with two and the enemy does not require that there should be the 100; if he has only got two he will exhaust all his ingenuity to get in between the two. That represents witness, testimony, that represents fellowship; he is against that. To deprive him of his power, to weaken, to dishonour the Lord's testimony, we must take higher ground in the matter of fellowship. And we have to see a little of what that higher ground is and what is involved in taking it.

We are speaking about the cross and higher ground and we begin by making the simple basic statement that the cross is the basis of fellowship. The cross itself is the very basis of fellowship. It is the basis of fellowship in this way, that the death of the Lord Jesus sets all that is of nature on one side. It is that which is of nature which provides the enemy with what he needs for destroying fellowship. To destroy him and his power and his work there must be a setting aside of the very ground which he demands and in the death of the Lord Jesus that ground is set aside. Man by nature is set aside in the death of the Lord Jesus. We have read it in 2 Cor. 5. "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge that if One died for all, then all died in Him, that they which live should henceforth live not unto themselves ... wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh ... there is a new creation ...." Henceforth not

unto themselves ... knowing no man after the flesh. You see that the cross (the death of the Lord Jesus includes us in it; we died in Him), is the setting aside of man by nature. That is a great fact declared but that is also a very real test of how much we have spiritually and truly entered into the death of the Lord Jesus. This will find us out and the test of our death in the death of the Lord Jesus is just how far we transcend what is of nature in one another and live in spiritual fellowship. It is very practical, this life in the heavenlies: it is how far we get above one another naturally and find one another in the spirit and stay there; how far we take the low ground of being affected by one another's natures naturally, by the old Adam in each other; or how far by the grace of God and in the energy of the Spirit we rise above that, repudiate that and abide in fellowship on resurrection ground. That is a test of our death with the Lord Jesus, that is a test of our doctrine of the cross, and it is a very practical test. The death of the Lord Jesus has set aside all worldly standpoints in relationships. As men judge, as men behave, as men react towards one another, as men make their selections and choices by their preferences, all that is set aside; that is the world's level of things, and in the death of the Lord Jesus we have died to that in the matter of relationships.

### **Selectiveness set aside by the cross**

I am preaching at my own heart far more strongly than to you. Natural and carnal preferences and selectiveness must be set aside if we are going to be true to our doctrine of the cross. If we really do mean what we say about identification with Christ in death, then all those preferences which come up in us according to nature, all that selectiveness among people, influenced, directed, controlled by what we naturally like or dislike, that has got to go. The cross has got to deal with all that and we have got to get above it. So much is bound up with this. It is higher ground. It represents the higher ground of spiritual maturity. We are beginning to grow up in the Lord when we occupy this ground. The apostle said to the Corinthian believers who were not on this higher ground, "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, babes. I fed you with milk and not with meat ...". Babes, occupying the low ground of "I prefer Paul" and others "I prefer Apollos" and others "I prefer Peter" and others, "Well, I prefer Christ", making Christ a party. That is spiritual infancy, immaturity. When you grow up you occupy higher ground where those things cease, and I want to say that this is not a matter of years, this is not necessarily a matter of time. In the natural very often as we get older, those stronger feelings of youth in this realm, in some measure pass away; we learn to judge and regard people in a different way. When we were younger we had very strong likes and dislikes in the realm of people. We selected our friends and avoided others, but

we are learning to act differently as we grow older. Some people in the matter of many years do not get out of that old childishness, but normally it is so. In the spiritual realm it need not be a matter of time and young men and women should attain spiritual maturity in this matter. Young people are influenced and swayed by strong preferences for people in the natural realm, setting up strong friendships which, while there may be nothing wrong in that, work out to the exclusion of other children of the Lord. That violates the one great truth, that of our oneness in the Lord Jesus and that we are one family. If you who in nature by reason of your youth would be influenced so strongly by likes and dislikes about people, even the Lord's children, and preferences and selectiveness, could reach the higher ground of this fellowship with every one child of God, bringing all into the realm of mutual love and consideration, you have reached spiritual maturity in a wonderful way beyond your years. This is where the Lord would have you. You know that we have been seeing that this higher ground is all with one end in view: the glory of the Lord Jesus. I think there are few things more calculated to reveal the glory of the Lord Jesus than brethren dwelling together in love: "How beautiful a thing it is to see brethren dwelling together in unity; it is like the precious ointment ...". It is the Lord who says that. The thing that is precious to the Lord is this, the high ground of fellowship where the cross sets aside what is of nature in the matter of relationships.

### **The cross and gathering together**

You notice in Ezra 3, the Passover was the great cause and occasion for the people coming out of their separate cities to one city, and coming up to that city. Jerusalem is a city upon a hill; Zion is always in elevation, it is always presented to us as a place high up. "Whither the tribes go up" represents ascendancy. It says in the seventh month the people were in their cities but they went up out of their cities to Jerusalem and the occasion was the Passover. When Christ crucified becomes the central and supreme Object of our hearts it is not difficult for us to leave our own separate position and come together with all the Lord's children. You have to have a centre which is strong enough to draw you away from your separateness, your isolation, from the things which occupy you as your own things.

The trouble at Corinth was that they all sought their own things, not the things which were Christ's; but here Christ crucified is drawing the people together, and what a time it was. There was great joy in Israel and they had a great time, blessed, happy fellowship because there was one centre, God's high place with the Lord Jesus in view. They came out of their own cities and were gathered together unto the Lord. Come to Corinth again and that is just what you have. Paul has come into a place where people are, so to speak, spiritually

and morally in their own cities, "I am of Paul" etc., they are all in their own circle. Now, says the apostle, "I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." That is the remedy, the higher ground will be occupied and there will be blessed fellowship, and all divisions and schisms will disappear when Christ crucified is only and fully in view. The cross is the basis of fellowship and Christ crucified is placed right over against the divisions that were at Corinth. And you notice in 2 Corinthians 5, relationships are to be regulated by our death with Christ, and our resurrection in Him. "All died in Him ... henceforth know we no man after the flesh." Relationships regulated by that death. It is the easiest thing in the world for us to know one another after the flesh; we are so accustomed to it, but there has got to be a deliberateness about this business. The flesh in one another comes out at us, the natural make-up of one another strikes us. It is there, probably always will be there, and I wonder where those disciples would have been if the Lord had taken account of them as we take account of one another! Oh, what a business He had with the natural side of those men. But He refused to take that as the ultimate thing. He knew that there was going to be something else. He knew what His cross would do with those men and He held them onto the cross because He knew that it would make all the difference. And afterwards it was proved that the cross had made all the difference in them, and He refused to abandon them on the natural side because He knew that there would be a spiritual side resultant from His cross. And He was holding on for that and to that; and, "Henceforth", the apostle says, "we know no man after the flesh."

That is the higher ground that we must deliberately take. I must take it. You must take it. The issue will arise again and again from day to day that in one another the natural features will come out and our natural features will meet those natural features with a strong dislike and the peril at that moment is the break in spirit, the rift in fellowship. The great opportunity of such a moment is for us to repudiate that and say, 'Yes, but that is a child of God, in that one the Lord is resident; I must trust all that natural side to the Lord, leave it to Him. My business is to seek to maintain as much fellowship as I possibly can with that child of God on the spiritual side. Although a thousand times that thing may come out and seek to drive me to the place where I cannot go on with them, I must hold on trusting the Lord that He has something there which is precious to Himself, and if I let go it will be defeat, the testimony will be let down, and so I stand with what is of God.' I believe as we take that ground we shall be surprised at the wonderful fruit that will come out of a new kind of fellowship. The other course means desolation and barrenness. You will never get anything out of that course, constantly living in that realm where all the time you are chafing against the natural side of people with whom you have to have contact, taking account of it. It leads nowhere, it means desolation, it means

barrenness; but when we take this other side, we have to leave all those matters with the Lord and trust Him. We cannot crucify other people's flesh; we must not try — it is the Holy Spirit's work. For us it is to take the positive side and then we shall be surprised that so much was possible. Fruit will come out of that side and what seemed to be a wilderness may be made to blossom as a rose. The cross is the basis of fellowship. The Christ enthroned is the bond of fellowship. We read in 1 Chronicles 12 when they came with one heart to make David King in Hebron, they sat down to eat and drink for three days. Their brethren made provision and those all round came along to make this fellowship a success. That is a wonderful picture of fellowship. Why? Because God's king is in his right place and he is the centre and object of all hearts. What was it that brought these people together in that wonderful oneness? It was the centre, David, the king. Paul sought to put the Lord Jesus in His place amongst the Corinthians. He sought to stand aside. 'Who is Paul?' said he. It was not that Paul was jealous of Apollos or Peter, he deals with himself in exactly the same way and says, 'Who am I, who is Paul? It is not Paul or Peter that matters, it is Christ that matters.'

## **The glory of God and Fellowship**

Earlier in Exodus 24 we saw Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy elders of Israel going up to the Lord in the mountain and we read that "they did eat and drink in the presence of the Lord." An extraordinary thing! That is not mundane, that is not vulgar, eating and drinking in the presence of the Lord. Here seventy men with one or two others are sitting down and literally having a feast in the presence of the God of Israel in His glory. There is no conflict in those ideas, but what was the thing that was in view? They saw the God of Israel and under His feet as it were a sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness; and we saw that that sapphire stone represents the universal glory of the Lord Jesus. Therefore the meaning of that incident is this, that when the universal glory of the Lord Jesus is the dominating feature then there is fellowship and feasting together, and fellowship is only possible by the Lord Jesus having His place. When God's King is in His right place in our hearts the resultant fellowship is very wonderful. What is the opposite of fellowship? Well, that which makes the contrary — divisions, strifes, separations — is jealousy. What is jealousy? Wanting something for yourself. Envy? Pride? All these things lie behind wars, strifes and divisions and they all come back to self. "I" says Paul, "I". When the Lord Jesus has supplanted self in our hearts, when He is enthroned as Lord, when we are taken up with Him, dominated by Him, spontaneously we will have love for one another; we will stop our selectiveness. That will cease in the measure in which the Lord Jesus

is the dominating, governing reality of our hearts, our devotion. Find the man or woman in whose heart the Lord Jesus really reigns, any life whose heart has been completely captured by the Lord Jesus, and that one has love for everybody and they love the unlovely and bear and forbear with the difficult. There may be some like that here; I want to be more like that. Higher ground, and the higher ground is God's King reigning in His place in our hearts. That is fellowship. If Christ really has captured our hearts there will be fellowship and love on this higher ground where jealousy, envy and pride and all such things have been left with the lowlands; we have climbed out of that when we see Him. It must be the high ground of Christ's exaltation in our hearts.

### **Fellowship and the testimony of Jesus**

In Exodus there were three movements in relation to the tabernacle. We know that that tabernacle was meant to be a setting forth of the Lord Jesus. It was Christ set forth according to God's thought, and there were three movements in relation to it. Firstly, all the people had individually to bring an offering, secondly they had to make the tabernacle, and thirdly Moses set the vessels in their right places and put the tabernacle together. That is what makes the Testimony of Jesus. First of all the individuals have to bring their offering; they are bringing something personally and individually which is a feature of Christ related to all the other features to make up the whole. Now the question is, 'What am I bringing on my part as an offering of the features of Christ to contribute to the whole setting forth of Christ according to God's thought?' We may perhaps be able to bring more than one kind of offering but at least the Lord would have in us one grace which betokens the Lord Jesus. Different Christians are marked by specific graces. In one you will see a wonderful reality of divine patience, in another a wonderful expression of divine love, and you go through all the features of Christ and you find that different children of God are marked in a special way by one feature of Christ and that is their offering. It cannot stand alone; that is only a part of Christ. Christ is not all patience. He is something else as well, not to the contrary, but there are many other graces and we all have to bring our offering for the whole testimony. That is, a part of Christ which is our contribution to the whole representation of Christ.

What am I bringing of Christ to the testimony? What are you bringing of Christ to the testimony? So often when we pray in that testimony to the oneness of the Body, that testimony which is borne among us, the Holy Spirit leads us to lay very special emphasis upon some special grace in that life. Sometimes the Lord holds us up as we pray in the matter of love, that this one may be specially marked by the love of God, that may be a special feature of Christ as His

testimony there; in another, wisdom. And so the Holy Spirit would have not just isolated fruits in us but He would have every one of us making a definite contribution to the whole testimony of Jesus. They had to bring their offerings personally and then they had to make the tabernacle, and that represents the 'working-at-it' side, exercise. These divine graces are not developed in us without real exercise in our hearts. We have got to get before the Lord about this: 'Lord, you want in me the feature of divine love.' Now before the Lord there has to be heart exercise about that, a daily working in the presence of God on that matter of Christ-likeness. We have to work at it, make the tabernacle, make the testimony.

And then Moses puts the vessels in their right places and sets up the tabernacle. Oh, but that is the last thing. Let the Lord Jesus stand in the place of Moses, and He brings all things together and puts them into their right place, controls everything and sets up the whole testimony to His glory. He will do that when we do our part, when we first of all bring our offering and contribution to the testimony. When we are engaged in spiritual exercise about this thing we will find the Lord just fitting it all in in a wonderful way and relating it to all the rest, and there will be a corporate setting up of a very blessed manifestation of Christ. That is fellowship, and He will put love and administration together. If it were all administration there would be a great deal of law; He will put Moses and Aaron together. Paul and Barnabas, love and administration. The Lord will just put you together in a way that there is a complement, a fitting in, but each of us has to stand in our own place, bringing our own offering, by exercise; that we should on our part represent the Lord Jesus in some special way. That is the way of testimony, of witness, of fellowship; that is higher ground.

Now I must stop there, not having finished this matter. I am anxious this should come home to our hearts and we should see the tremendous importance for the sake of the testimony of our Lord Jesus, for the sake of the undoing of the work of the devil, for every good sake, that in the Lord's Name we should take higher ground in the matter of fellowship. Begin to do it now. If you have a strain, a rift, a break between you and that has been brought about by some fleshly reaction on your part, say, 'Look here, we were in the flesh when that came about; that was done in the old Adam life of things. We will put that right.' Make this thing a practical matter and apply this truth. Deal with the Lord on this thing. If you are finding it difficult to get on with some child of God because of the natural expression, go and take higher ground for more grace. Do not say it is impossible and we cannot hope for anything better; believe that all things are possible by the grace of God and you will be surprised at what comes out of it. Do believe this and take higher ground now in the matter of fellowship because we have got to live together for ever at close quarters

and the Lord must bring us into a spiritual condition for that. There will be only one street in the New Jerusalem; you cannot live up a side street in the New Jerusalem. There is only one street!

## THE FOUNDATION OF A LIFE OF VICTORY IN CHRIST

*Reading: Numbers 23:7-10,18-24; 24:3-9,15-25; 22:1-41; 23:1-3,21,23; Gal. 3:13; Rom. 8:1.*

We have been occupied so far with the matter of the cross and higher ground, seeing that the Lord is seeking to have His people occupied on higher ground with Himself spiritually and morally, and that this especially relates to the time of the end when the Lord Jesus will appear in glory and call to meet Him in the air those who are looking for His appearing. Literally, translation to be with the Lord on high must always be in company with a spiritual state of elevation. A state is required in the Lord's people which is the spiritual counterpart of that literal event, that they are already spiritually occupying the high places, that they may come literally to occupy *the* high place with the Lord. And we believe that we are in the end time, that everything is pointing towards the hour of His appearing, and so we expect that He will gather His people together and call them spiritually higher up, onto higher ground, and that is the call which is engaging our attention in these chapters.

The word of the gospel has its touch for unsaved ones as well as for the Lord's people. And so we come to this matter of the cross and higher ground, and in this chapter we want to see the foundation of a life of victory in Christ. That there *is* such a life hardly needs to be stressed here. The Lord has made it evidently clear through His Word that there is a life of victory for His people, and we simply take that as a fact without arguing or seeking to prove it. What we do seek to do as the Lord enables is to see the foundation of it, what is basic to it.

### **A people in victory**

The passages which we have been reading all bear upon that in a wonderful way. Coming back to these portions of the Old Testament in the book of Numbers, we have that part where Israel, the people of God, having come out of Egypt in the power of the blood of the Lamb slain, having been separated unto God, have now gone beyond Jordan and are in the presence of their foes,

which foes are taking account of them quite seriously as being a real menace to their dominion in the earth. And Balak, king of Moab, recognises that these people of God represent a great threat to his kingdom and to the very existence of his nation as a people. He uses very strong words in expressing what he feels about them, that they will “lick up the inhabitants of the earth as the ox licks up the grass” (Num. 22:4). That is the appraisal that He makes concerning Israel, and he recognises that a people in victory is indeed a menace to his kingdom. We hardly need to have that interpreted in New Testament light. There is an enemy who has a kingdom; to him and his kingdom a people in victory represent a threat and a danger. And it would not be going too far to say that that enemy has already measured the significance of that people in victory unto the degree of wiping him out. The Word of God makes it perfectly clear that that is going to be the issue. It is that a people in full victory, the people of God, the church, the Body of Christ, will ultimately rid this earth of the enemy kingdom. It will be through the church, His Body, that this kingdom will be wiped out. And the enemy knows quite well victorious Christians are the greatest menace to his existence, a threat to his whole kingdom, and that is what is here as typified in Balak and Moab. And so he has to consider how best he can nullify these people, how best he can cripple them, rob them of their power, destroy their effectiveness, frustrate the end which he sees is threatening him. He comes to one conclusion, that if only he can bring these people under the power and operation of a curse they are done for and he is safe.

## **The blood and victory**

Knowing of a man who has a spirit of prophecy, and who has power to bless and to curse in the Name of the Lord, he sends for that man Balaam saying, “Come there is a people come up out of Egypt, come curse them for me.” We know the rest of the story, we need not go through all the details of Balaam’s curse, but we come to some striking, significant and wonderfully blessed things in this story which lead us into the New Testament with new appreciation. The last verse of chapter 22 shows that Balak took Balaam up into the high places of Baal. These are the high places of the enemy. Before the Lord has done with them they will be captured for the Lord and turned against the enemy for the good of His own people. That is what the Lord is always doing for His own, those who trust Him. The Lord takes hold of those mountains of Satanic opposition and adversity and makes them mountains of blessing to us. Balaam is taken up into the high places and he looks from the high places and sees the uttermost part of the camp of Israel, and then under the sovereign government and control of God, not being allowed to speak his own words, he begins to utter things about Israel which are very wonderful things when you

think about them. And *one* of them, which we have read, is full of wonderful value, Num. 23:21: “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel.” Was there no iniquity in Jacob? Was there no perverseness in Israel? Why, half the Old Testament is taken up with the iniquity and perverseness of Jacob and in Israel, but it clearly states, “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel.” The people of Israel in themselves were full of iniquity, full of perverseness. It is strikingly impressive to notice how the name Jacob is used here. Jacob is Israel’s old name, the name of the man in the flesh. Here he is in a position where God does not see iniquity or perverseness in him — and yet it was there — but God did not see it. Something has happened that God should not see it, and that is the heart of the whole story, that is the heart of the gospel. While in themselves there was much iniquity and much perverseness, whenever they came from underneath their covering by the precious blood and whenever they are found in a state of rebellion of heart, God Himself charges them with those very things: iniquity and perverseness. But while they abide in their covenant fellowship with Him, while they are under the shelter of that precious blood, while they walk in the light as He is in the light, God no longer sees iniquity and perverseness, no longer lays it to their charge: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

Two things had happened with Israel here: they had come out of Egypt and gone over Jordan, they had come out of the kingdom of darkness and through Jordan, and in their union with Christ typically in His death, burial and resurrection, they had been translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love, and brought into the place of His triumph. They were out from Egypt, they were over Jordan, and we here of course know quite well the typical meaning of Egypt, the Red Sea, and Jordan. They are in a position by reason of the blood which had been shed and appropriated for their deliverance from the power of the enemy, and they had been brought into the place of victory by having been crucified with Christ as represented in Jordan. And that position which appropriates all the work of the Lord Jesus in His cross on their behalf, their faith acceptance of it, their faith standing in it, that position for ever meant that what they were in nature, full of iniquity and perverseness, was not taken account of by God, but that all the moral excellencies and spiritual glory of the Lord Jesus into Whom they were typically baptized, was laid to their account and covered up what they were by nature. God beheld not iniquity or perverseness. I think it is a wonderful thing. I must confess that when I first began to seriously read the Bible and came on this very passage in the book of Numbers it held me up for a bit and I could not get round it: “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel.” I said to myself, ‘There is some conjuring here somehow, for if I read the Bible rightly I see a good deal of iniquity and perverseness’,

and I had to come to see how God, who sees everything, did not see that. And we have come to see that God, in what He has done in and through His Son in the cross, has put away all iniquity and all perverseness on our behalf, and that when we take all Calvary's work by faith and stand in the good of it, trusting Him, He no longer sees us as we are in nature. He sees us as we are in Christ and all the ground of condemnation is done away. That is very simple Gospel, I trust simple enough for everyone to understand, but that is how God gets over this difficulty of not seeing us as we are naturally, and not seeing that thing which is in us by nature but seeing us as though we had never sinned at all and as though there never was any sin in us at all. God has done something to make that not a bit of make-believe, but of glorious working reality for us.

### **The curse nullified by the cross**

That calls us to focus our attention upon another mount where it was all done. There in the book of Numbers is the mountain upon which Balak and Balaam stood. It is first of all by the enemy meant to be constituted the mount of a curse. God comes in and makes the mount of a curse a mountain of blessing, and from that mountain top you can look down the ages and see another mount, a green hill outside a city wall where our dear Lord was crucified, and on that mountain the curse destroyed itself. We have read in Gal. 3:13, "Christ was made a curse for us", that is, in our stead. He was made a curse in our stead. He who knew no sin was made sin in our stead, in our place, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. On that mount the curse which rested upon the whole race (and rests upon you and me by nature now if we are outside of Christ) was taken by the Lord Jesus and worked out to the full; exhausted and burned out, so to speak, in Him, so that there was no more curse left because He was made a curse. He gathered up in His own Person all the ground of the curse, every bit of ground upon which the curse could rest and did rest. He gathered it into His own representative and Holy Person, and so the ground being there on Him, not *in* Him but *on* Him, the curse with all its judgment, all its destruction, came down upon Him. 'Jehovah lifted up His rod, O Christ, it fell on Thee. Jehovah bade His sword awake, O Christ, it woke against Thee.' The curse was finished on the person of a representative One on that mount. He was made a curse for us. And when you destroy the curse by taking away the very ground of a curse there is no more condemnation, the very ground of condemnation has been taken away and condemnation is robbed of all its power.

Now, it is a high place to reach the appropriation of that. We are found spiritually on a mountain when we really get hold of that. I may speak to the most matured and advanced believer and say that. I would say it to the unsaved,

to the young believer, and I would say it to the oldest and most advanced believer, that it is high ground to occupy, to really have that in the grip of your faith. It is ascendancy, that is the point. It is ascendancy over the power of the enemy; it is high ground; it is elevation to be there and I am quite sure that all of us need to possess that high ground more thoroughly, more truly in our hearts. For you see, a curse in the Scriptures is that which always brings crippling, paralysing. You notice immediately there was a curse pronounced at the beginning by the work of Satan. Everything was paralysed, all nature was paralysed and there has never, since that day to this, yet been a full realization of destiny on the part of any bit of the creation. In Romans 8 we see that the whole creation was subjected to vanity. Vanity there means it was caused to labour in vain, it never reached the end for which it groaned and for which it was created and it never will until the Lord Jesus universally has His place, until there is a full redemption of the whole creation. Nothing has ever yet arrived at fulness in this creation since the day that a curse was pronounced upon it and upon man. Man has never yet reached his destiny and never outside Christ will he do so because this curse has caused the reign of vanity to come in.

On other separate occasions you have instances of a curse. You remember when Achan took the Babylonish garment and the wedge of gold from Jericho and hid them in his tent, a curse was pronounced and everything that Achan had, all his possessions and his family, had to be brought to an end. There could be no going on; and then Jericho was overthrown, destroyed and the word of the Lord says, "Cursed be the man who builds this city, with the death of his firstborn shall he set up his gates." A curse was pronounced upon Jericho; and when you come to the life of the prophet Elisha, the people of Jericho come to him and say that the city is good, is pleasing, but the waters are bad and the trees cast their fruit before their time. The fruit of a curse worked in this way: nothing came through to maturity, nothing came to the full end, it failed before its time; man falling into his grave before he has reached that point of full development which God intended for Him. A curse always paralyses, nullifies, brings about barrenness and desolation. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us." In His cross He took the curse upon Himself as He took up a position of representing the accursed race and destroyed the power of the curse in His own Being. And now it is possible for us to come right through to the full realization of all that God eternally intended for man, and God is said to have eternally intended, before this world was, that we should be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. The curse got in the way of that, it nullified that, it paralysed that, but now the curse has been removed in the cross of the Lord Jesus. It is a high place to come to, to apprehend that. It is possible, and the possibility is so thoroughly established as to have already been realised in the first One of those men of that new creation. He is

the firstborn among many brethren and as man He has been perfected to be the representative and the forerunner of all those sons whom He will bring to glory, and God has secured that thing in One and because He has done it in One He can do it in all the race. Now we have to come to the practical application of this, for we have got to see that a curse, while it is always something that paralyzes and destroys, always comes about by contact with something cursed.

### **Deliverance from condemnation**

Satan was cursed and man entered into a kind of agreement with him at the beginning and man came under the curse that rested upon Satan. That is a thing to recognise. God never intended man to go to hell but if man voluntarily associates himself with one for whom hell was created, there is no alternative; he becomes cursed because he is related to a cursed one and the curse comes upon him. Jericho and all who were in that city were cursed by God. If Achan takes the cursed thing he comes under the curse and must perish. What then is the way of deliverance? It is the way of separation, and that is a feature of this story. Balak says, "There is a people come up out of Egypt", and Balaam in his prophecy twice says, "God brought them out of Egypt"; and then they were over Jordan; typically they were separated unto God from all that upon which the curse rested and, therefore, the curse could not be applied to them. And Balaam had to say, 'You cannot bring these people under a curse, they are separated unto God by that lamb slain, that precious shed and sprinkled blood, by that typical death in Jordan.' Separation unto God from the old creation, and from the world, is the way of deliverance from condemnation and from paralysis.

The apostle said in the Galatian letter, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Separation from where the curse is by the cross of the Lord Jesus, brought out onto ground of glorying in life triumphant in Christ, on the high ground of no condemnation. Condemnation is a low ground, it is the ground where the enemy operates to paralyse the people of God. When shall we sufficiently apprehend the good of this, that if truly we have by faith laid hold of all that the Lord Jesus Christ did for us in His cross, we have been put into the position where the very ground of accusation and condemnation has been put entirely away and there is no condemnation? For there are multitudes of the Lord's people who are on that low ground of condemnation, still living under accusation, and the enemy is paralyzing them because they have allowed themselves to come under the effect of the curse. In their minds, in their imaginations, they have not persistently maintained the position that in Christ they are cut off from all that, that there is no condemnation. There is defeat, paralysis,

helplessness because of accepting a ground from which the cross of the Lord Jesus has severed them, cut them off and delivered them.

Of course it is a challenge to our position. Have we really come out by faith through Jordan in virtue of the precious blood, from the old creation? Have we repudiated that and seen that Christ is the way out for us, and that in Christ there is a new creation, and we are in Christ? Are we separated utterly unto God from the world? If so, the condemnation of the enemy is broken for us and he now recognises that we are in a position which represents a terrible menace to him. What he is out to do is to bring us back again onto a ground of condemnation and accusation. The enemy does not give you up when he has lost you; he follows you to bring you back. If only he can lodge in your mind some ground of condemnation and get you to accept condemnation and accusation you will soon be down, paralysed, but faith must take the high place of justification. It is a high place because it represents not only something which is a delight to our own hearts but it represents the undoing of all the work of the devil. It breaks his power. His power can only operate upon the ground of condemnation. If he can get us there again, in defeat, he will. By faith stand on justification ground in Christ and he has no power. These chapters in the book of Numbers represent a people in strength. Twice it says, "He hath the strength of a wild ox ... like a lion." Here is strength, power, dominion; and all because they stood upon justification ground where God sees no iniquity and perverseness. It is a strong, high position to be in to really apprehend the first effect of our salvation, that we are justified by faith in the Lord Jesus. We want to hold onto that ground because it is revealed by the Word of God that when the Lord finally deals with the enemy He will deal with him as the accuser. This means that his work of accusation will go right onto the end and that he will seek to the last moment, in an awful persistency, to bring the child of God under accusation and condemnation.

### **Walking in the light**

You and I are the fields of the enemy's attention and cruelty to bring us down onto ground where we accept condemnation, and we have to keep off all that ground. We have got to continually recognise the power of the cross to cut us off from that, to avail ourselves of the power of the cross of Christ to deliver us from the power of the curse which brings condemnation and the dominion of Satan; appropriating Calvary's victory right up to the end so that we overcome because of the blood of the Lamb. Overcome who? The accuser, by the blood of the Lamb. The power of Satan as the accuser is broken by the blood of the Lamb. Yes, that is high ground. There are two sides to it. There is the faith position as to our standing. Once and for all at the beginning we took by faith

our standing on the ground of justification and were brought into a place of victory and deliverance. But there is something more than standing, there is such a thing as walking. We, by faith, stand justified before God, but the Lord calls upon us to walk in justification. The Word of the Lord is this, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another (that is, with God and His Son) and the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, keeps on cleansing us from all sin." "If we walk in the light"; now that has to do with everyday affairs. It means this, that in fellowship with God dark things will be made manifest. We are in the light where dark things are seen, where things that are wrong are revealed, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses ...". Things that are there will be made manifest as we walk in the light.

What are you going to do with the dark things, the evil things, the wrong things, the sins that are still in believers coming out in the light of fellowship with God? They have to be taken before Him and dealt with instantly. That is walking in the light, moving in the light, that is exercise in the light. It is dealing with things that the light reveals as wrong, dealing with them instantly in relation to the cross of the Lord Jesus and repudiating them and putting them away. And as we do so the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son keeps on cleansing in relation to those things. By faith we take the initial position of justification, but any revealed wrong in us not taken to the cross becomes the ground of condemnation, and while we let it remain the enemy will have power to bring us under condemnation. If you delay in the matter of dealing with the Lord in the power of the blood in respect of anything that He lays upon your heart as wrong and shows you to be evil, you will be beaten, baffled, crippled, paralysed, and the enemy will at once encamp upon delayed repentance and confession and bring you into a place where you are helplessly crippled.

As you walk in the light, as you act, as you are exercised in relation to the light, fellowship with Christ continues and the blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing. As you go on walking the blood goes on cleansing, but stand still in the matter of something that the light has made clear as wrong and the blood is suspended and all witness until that thing is dealt with. We must keep short accounts with God so as not to be brought down into defeat, and must maintain our ground by abiding in Christ, which is another way of saying, 'walking in the light as He is in the light', and the blood keeps on cleansing from all sin. How does the enemy get us down onto condemnation ground? Only by delaying in the matter of repentance or confession, or not dealing with something the Lord has shown us to be wrong. To defeat him we must at once go back to the cross with every wrong thing revealed and put the wrong thing on the cross, put it back there behind the work of our Lord Jesus, and as we put

that cross upon every sinful thing revealed in us as believers, the cross becomes victory over the power of the enemy in our lives that would bring us into condemnation and spiritual paralysis. We have to walk there and stay there by exercise. Israel was saved from the direct action of that curse because they stood in the light which the precious blood had provided to bring them into fellowship with God, but Balaam got round a back door a little while after and subtly worked with Israel and taught them to make alliances. He whom the devil cannot openly defeat he can very often subtly ensnare, and when Israel was caught in alliances with the cursed thing the enemy got the thing he had sought, of which he had been robbed in the direct way. And Israel, by alliances with that which was cursed, lost their ascendancy, their glory and came under judgment. May we not yield to any subtle suggestion of the enemy to come down onto the ground of alliance with sin, with the world, with that which lies under the curse, but stand clear in the light, walking in the light, abiding in fellowship with the Father and with the Son in the Holy Spirit, the blood continually cleansing from all sin. Do take that high ground.

If the Lord gets people onto that high ground where they stand positively, glorying in the fact that in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation, the devil has no ground whatever and they stand and abide there. That is high ground for all believers; many of the Lord's advanced children are today finding themselves in a state where the enemy is accusing them and they are taking it on. Many Christians are coming under a spirit of accusation. If you take your position and stand there, there is no condemnation. Believe that. Plead the precious blood of the Lord Jesus against the accuser and there is no condemnation.

I was asked to go and see a poor soul who had come into that condition in a terrible way. She had known the Lord for years, loved the Lord and enjoyed much of the Lord's presence, had been used greatly of the Lord, but for some reason or other she had come under accusation from the enemy. The enemy accused her of sin and so inflated that thing until she believed she had committed the unpardonable sin. There she was, a dark cloud over her face, under the deepest depression, all joy and hope and rest gone, like one hunted, pursued. She had lost her Lord, and do you know for a long time, for an hour I tried to get her to utter one sentence: "The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanses us from all sin." No, she could not get that out; she would say anything else but not that. I tried everything I knew of to get her to express that word. No, as soon as she got near to that she was done. I prayed, I entreated, I besought, I almost put the words into her mouth, but no, anything you like, but not one expression concerning the blood of Jesus Christ. And I saw where the full force of the enemy is directed. If you stand on that blood he is beaten. If you recognise the great and glorious truth that the blood of Jesus Christ represents justification, no condemnation, the very ground of the enemy will be

taken from him and turned against him and you will be a people in victory, and you will represent a great menace against the kingdom of Satan.

The Lord make us to know the victory of the blood as we have never known it, for His Name's sake.

(to be continued)