



*the*  
*Golden*  
*Candlestick*

**THE WAY**

**Part 2**

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## THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S ANOINTING

*“Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, ‘I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?’ But Jesus answering said to him, ‘Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.’ Then he permitted Him. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased’ ” (Matt. 3:13-17).*

*“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:1-2).*

*“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4).*

Now we come to the third of these major features of Christ as the way, one of which we have just read. Its part and its counterpart in Christ and in the church is anointing. The statement is made, “Jesus of Nazareth ... God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 10:38). This took place on the ground of resurrection where the new man after God’s mind emerges. We are not now trying to say a great deal about the Holy Spirit. This is not a discourse on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the many aspects of the Holy Spirit’s Person and work. It is just focussing down upon one thing only, that is, the meaning of Christ’s anointing with the Holy Spirit. This is the chief and the inclusive factor and feature in the new creation, in the risen man, the new man: that He is anointed with the Holy Spirit. It is that anointing which marks Him out from heaven by God as that which is acceptable to God and can come to Him and stand before Him in His presence. When the heavens were opened and the voice from heaven was

heard saying: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased”, God was saying in those few words, ‘I have a man Whom I can accept, to Whom I can commit Myself, the man of My pleasure.’ And this One is a type of those who are foreordained to be conformed to His image, and the mark, the seal, the indication of God is the giving of the Holy Spirit in anointing.

That resolves itself into two or three quite simple and concise things. Firstly, that this is something which is wholly *of* and *through* God; secondly, this is something which is wholly *for* God; and thirdly, this is something which is to be wholly *by* God. Let us look at these things more closely.

### **Something wholly of and through God**

The anointing indicates that this is something wholly and exclusively through God. Of all the things that God has ever done, the thing which most of all sets forth the uniqueness and exclusiveness of God’s work is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Men can do a very great deal and very many wonderful things when they have got life to handle, but when once life is extinct, man has to close the door and walk out. He can do no more. If God does not go in and take up the situation, that is the end for ever. It is God and God only. And so the emphasis is so constantly made in the New Testament, after the Holy Spirit had come, upon the fact that *God* raised Him. “You nailed (Him) to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again” (Acts 2:23-24).

It was a unique and peculiar intervention of God, the fact that this One is back here alive, and there is no question about His death. We need not stay to go over that ground, to see how very sure His death was made. This is no theatrical set-up, no pretence. His death was real, and the fact that He is now back here alive represents a mighty intervention of God in the whole course of human history.

Perhaps you think there have been other resurrections from the dead. No, there have not. There have been resuscitations, but no resurrections, and there is a great deal of difference between resuscitation and resurrection. The resurrection body of the Lord Jesus Christ is something altogether different, from any other body that was resuscitated — raised from the dead, you may say — yes, in a certain sense that was true of Lazarus, it was true of Dorcas, it was true of the daughter of Jairus, but not in the sense in which it was true of the raising of Jesus from the dead. We

will not stay with that. There is plenty to be gathered in to give proof of that and to explain it, but it is something which is distinct, which never was before, in its nature. If God does that, it says that thing is wholly through God. The very existence of that is through God, the very being of that is through God, and God sets His seal upon that as having its being only by His intervention and His unique action. The anointing says that the existence of this One or this thing is something which could only be by God and is only through God. That is very simple, perhaps, in statement, but you see that is one of the constituents of Christ as the way, and it is that which is taken up in Christianity — the Christianity, of course, of the beginning. It is not true of the Christianity we know today, but the Christianity with which we are dealing, with which we are occupied at the beginning, was that.

Here is something which, by the anointing Spirit, is marked out as God's act. No one else brought this into being, nothing else could produce this. This is of that nature which is not of the will of man or of the will of the flesh, but God. The only Christianity which will abide and go through the ordeal of fire and testing at the end into which we have already come is the Christianity which is only through God, not of man's making, producing, organizing or propagating, but something that God does. We have to be very sure that we rest upon that. It is not the Christianity of our parents, it is not the Christianity of our associations, of our Christian education, or of our Christian tradition, of our denomination, of our society; it is the Christianity which rests upon God having done something in us that no other power in this universe could do, that we have received the Holy Spirit of anointing which attests that this is something of God, and therefore God can set His seal upon it and say, 'That is a thing with which I am wholly well pleased.'

The counterpart of that is in the word — "He has made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6 A.V.). It is a pity that the translators have not given the full translation. They have just left it "accepted in the Beloved" which many Christians have thought to mean 'accepted among Christians'; "in the Beloved" — that is the family of God. That, of course, is included, but it does not mean that. The word is in the masculine — "the beloved one", so that this Christ standing on the far bank of Jordan under an open heaven as the attested Beloved, is the One in Whom we are accepted; beloved of God in Christ even as He is beloved of God. That is the meaning of the anointing and that is the way. That is Christ as the way, and that is what makes the church the way, and oh, that the

church were like that, oh, that Christianity were after that kind, that all knowing it and coming into touch with it could really recognize and sense, feel that there is something here that is not of man; it is only of God.

But let us not think in broad terms. Let us come right back to ourselves. Is our very existence a testimony to something that God alone could do and God has done, and the witness is that we have received the Spirit?

### **Something wholly for God**

Then this is wholly for God. The whole history of anointing through the Old Testament in figure, type and in symbol, is related to that which was anointed, being separated unto God, being hedged around for God, being shut up to God alone. This, by the anointing, is God's sole and only property. Various words — consecration, sanctification, holiness, separation, are all the same thing in essence and root. They all mean that this thing is put apart from all else for God, distinguished from everything else, separated from everything else, apart from everything else — it is God's, it is unto God. It is not to itself, it is not to the world, it is not for men. So the apostle puts that great truth into familiar words when he says, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (2 Cor. 5:14-15). The anointing takes away all our rights to ourselves, rights to our own lives, rights to our own interests, rights to our own prospects, rights to our own arrangements and plans and programmes. It takes away all those rights and puts those rights in God's hands, saying that our future, our time, our strength, our everything, is now in God's hands. The Holy Spirit has come and taken hold of that.

How true that was of the Lord Jesus. Every moment of that brief but so full life was unto God, not unto men's systems, not unto the thing that was there established, the religious order; but every movement, word, every going or staying was by consultation with the Father. The Spirit consumed Him unto God as a mighty consuming fire. So the anointing says that what God has raised together with Christ is for God. That is searching. That has got to come down meticulously to all the points of our lives. Oh, that we were alive to this! No doubt most of you who are the Lord's do consult the Lord about most things in your lives, ask for His guidance and His counsel, but that is just the system, largely the external

system, of our lives. There is a very great deal more inside of us that has to be subjected to the scrutiny of God. We have got to get the permission of God to think like that, to feel like that. We have to bring our moods to the Lord, our temperamentalisms to the Lord, and say, 'Lord, is it right to be like this? Is this acceptable to You that I feel like this, that I am down like this? Is this right, is this really for God?' It has to run right through our whole being. That is what it means to be filled with the Spirit. If you are filled with the Spirit there is no room for anything else — you are filled, that is all, and to be filled means that God occupies the uttermost recess and corner, and dictates about everything. We shall only get over and out of our moods and our bad times as we come into the presence of the Lord and say, 'Lord, I do not believe that this is what glorifies You; that this is of the Holy Spirit; that this is right; that this is in the realm of the well-pleasing; because of that, it must be changed.' You have got to have an adequate motive. If you just come because you are feeling miserable and say, 'Lord, I am feeling so miserable, do make me a little happier' — that is for yourself. Do you think that is an adequate motive? 'Lord, I am having such a bad time, do give me a better time.' Is that good enough? No! 'Lord, this is not of the Spirit, this is not for Your glory, this does not speak of a Spirit-filled life, this does not correspond to the anointing, this can produce nothing for the Lord.' That is an adequate ground upon which the Lord can work. It is our motives that the Spirit searches out, and so the anointing goes through like a refining fire to deal with all motives, all thoughts and intents of the heart to bring about an inclusive state where it is all unto the Lord.

### **Something wholly by God**

Then the anointing signifies that all is by God. Everything from that point is to be by God. All the values of the anointed life are for God. All the future possibilities of a life from that point on the other side of Jordan under the open heaven, all the possibilities of that life, from that moment, are from God only. Oh, you can go and do ten thousand things with your life. You can be very successful in your own sphere, your own profession, you can accomplish many things without the anointing, but the point is — how much of that is related to the eternal purposes of God and will be seen in eternity? How much of that will go right through? How much of that will appear again with eternal glory? How much of that will have served the ends of God? That is the question, and nothing whatever can serve

God's ends that does not come out from God, is not done by God. That is very thorough. The anointing means that we are given the power to know the things which are of God, and no unanointed person can know the things which are of God. That is categorically stated in the Scriptures. The things which are of God are a closed realm, a closed book, until we have the anointing. So that, what can you do without knowledge, what can you be without knowledge in any sphere of life? Well, nothing is possible if we do not know anything about it; we are just helpless, impotent. And so in the realm of the things of God, the Holy Spirit of anointing is given that we might know the things which are of God.

It means that the anointing introduces us into a new and other world of knowing, and the knowing is the beginning of everything, because you can never do until you know, and therefore the anointing leads on to capacities for doing what no one else can do, and the anointing is given that we might go through what no one else can go through and may be found at last standing when everything else has gone. He is the eternal Spirit. Everything with Him is of an eternal character and nature. The great phrase which governs all this is 'in the Spirit'. "I was in the Spirit", said John (Rev. 1:10); "praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20); everything in the Spirit. It is the great comprehensive, but very detailed governing thing, is this little phrase — 'in the Spirit'. Anything that is not done in the Spirit will not be of any value — from heaven's standpoint, I mean, from eternity's standpoint. It has no spiritual value. It is only prayer in the Spirit that counts, but prayer in the Spirit does count. Preaching is valueless unless it is in the Spirit, preaching in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit — which means our conduct, our way of life — in the Spirit. It is all to be in the Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit comes in anointing, He comes as the very preciousness of Christ. The very preciousness of Christ comes with the Holy Spirit. That which is precious to God in Christ is brought to the life by the Holy Spirit, and when the Holy Spirit is there, there is that which is very precious to God. That life, like a vessel, holds a very precious treasure. It is the preciousness of Christ. "This precious value, then, is for you who believe", says Peter (1 Pet. 2:7), so that "He reproveth kings for their sakes, saying, Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm" (1 Chron. 16:21-22). 'My Spirit is upon them, there is something very precious to Me there.' You be careful how you speak about a person who has the Holy Spirit; you be very careful what you do with an anointed vessel. God's eye is upon that, the Spirit is there, and the Spirit implies the

preciousness of Christ. There is something there very sacred to God and very precious to God.

The Holy Spirit has ever, by anointing, singled out the object of anointing as something before God in dignity, something set up in dignity. The old symbol of the setting up of a pillar and anointing it carries this significance: something which is set up before God having the Spirit upon it; set up, not lying prone upon the earth in that undignified position of helplessness and impotence that cannot stand up, cannot lift itself up, but something that has been set up before God. The anointing means that the anointed are set up before God in dignity. You go back over the Old Testament and you see what dignity the anointing gave. These are kings and priests unto God, there is something dignified about this, and an anointed life before God is something very dignified. There is no conceit, no self-sufficiency, no pride, but we ought to recognize that, having the Spirit, there is something there with us of very great importance to God. There is a right sense in which we are very important, in showing men the way to God. It is no use our going about as though we had lost everything in the world, as though we are poor, miserable wretches hardly holding ends together, going to everybody to try and get help, full of self-pity like beggars or paupers. That is a contradiction and a denial of the anointing.

The anointing sets us up in a right sense and makes us dignified and gives us competence, something to draw upon, wealth, standing. The élite of God are the anointed. They are the aristocracy of heaven. The anointing means that. Take that in the right way and ask the Lord to save us from our pettiness, our misery, our lack of real dignity. This is the way. You read the book of the Acts and see that these people were not going about the world begging for help to carry on the work of the Lord or for their own sustenance. They were dignified, and, in a sense, independent people who could in a right spirit say, 'We have got what you need, we do not have to come to you to get what we need, we have it; it is with us.' The Lord save us from spiritual pride, the pedestal, but at the same time, make us people who know that we have, if I may use a vulgarism, "got the goods", we have got the answer, we have got the solution. God needs the Josephs today. When the problem of spiritual sustenance is so acute, the problem of spiritual bread so pressing, when Christianity does not know, it is for a people like Joseph to know the secret. "In whom the spirit of God is" (Gen. 41:38).

Well, that is the way. You all agree, that is the way. Christ was like that and therefore He was the way. The Lord would have us like that

because we are not straining this application. We have Scripture for it, that “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God” (2 Cor. 1:21). In Him we are anointed, and so Christianity should be the Way in this sense — a people whose existence is accounted for by God; a people who are utterly and wholly for God; and a people who are marked all the time by things which God is doing; their sufficiency is of God, and it is a glorious sufficiency. The Lord make us such a people of the Way.

## THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S WALK

We now come to the fourth of the five major features of Christ as the Way — His walk.

There are two fragments to which I would like to refer — one in the Gospel by John, the other in the first letter of John. “Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life’ (John 8:12). Here is a walking in the way, and the way is Christ. “The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked” (1 John 2:6). We can just look at that last clause — “as He walked”.

When we quietly consider and meditate upon the life of the Lord Jesus during the three and a half years of His walk in the midst of men, there are certain things about Him which are quite evident and quite impressive. Those things are the things which must be carried over into our own lives if others are to have indicated to them the way to God.

### **Christ's consciousness**

We will begin by noting one thing that is so very evident and always present and noticeable about the Lord Jesus in His earthly life, and that is His consciousness. In a greater or lesser way every life that is really alive is marked by a consciousness, and in a very marked way this was true of the Lord Jesus. His consciousness was that of His relationship to heaven. You just cannot fail to recognize that. He is constantly speaking about it, and His speaking of it so frequently and so much is because that is the ever-present and uppermost consciousness with Him, His relationship to heaven. Just as a man's native country is in his blood, so heaven was in the spirit of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps you know what that is. You of course do not know very much what that means unless you have been away from your native country, and then you know after a time that that country is

not so far away after all, it is in your very blood. There is a pull and a call and a remembrance, the consciousness of where you belong, where you came from, which rises up and asserts itself. I think some of you know what I mean. If I may make a personal reference, there was a time years ago when I spent years in London and was not able, neither was there the demand then, for going to Scotland so often as there has been in recent years. At a certain time in the year Scotland made such an appeal that I just had to go, that is all. If it were only for a weekend, not with any object at all, not for any work, but I just had to go and come back again. Something would not let me rest until I had just gone and come. The pull was there.

Now what is true in the natural was true in the spiritual with the Lord Jesus. "I am come down from heaven" (John 6:38). And He even said that He was still in heaven while He was here (John 3:13). Strange, strange speaking! The Son that came from heaven and is in heaven! It was this strong deep consciousness of His relatedness to heaven, and that had various meanings for Him.

### **Heaven the source of His life**

It meant that heaven was the source of His life. His life came out from heaven, and He was all the time living out from heaven by that heavenly life. He could find nothing here to answer to the life that was in Him. Everything here just failed to give what that life in Him demanded and required. He just could not live here except in so far as life was constantly ministered to Him from heaven. Heaven was the place of all His resources. For every demand He went back to heaven to have it met. That is, He got away in spirit, He got away in prayer, to draw what was required for the situation, the need, the next move, for every crisis and for His whole life. Heaven was His source of supply.

### **Heaven the seat of His government**

Heaven was the seat of His government. In everything He went to heaven for direction. You know what I mean, He got His life from heaven, He refused to be governed by things here, He refused to be governed by the world, what the world expected, what the world demanded. He did not allow the world and its mind and its way to influence or affect Him at all. He refused to be governed by religious tradition, by the established

religious order. He refused to be governed by religious expectation and religious precedent. Often they tried to impinge that upon Him and tell Him that was the thing expected, that was the thing done, that was how it was usually and He refused it all. He stood back and got His direction from heaven. The oft-repeated phrase indicated this heavenly life — “My hour has not yet come” — the phrase which He used in so many different connections, at so many different times, not meaning as He used it that final hour, His hour, but meaning, ‘The time has not come just at this moment for Me to do that, I have not got it from heaven; it may be your hour, it may be the hour of circumstance, it may be the hour of seeming demand, but that does not weigh with Me; My hour is the hour when heaven says, Now!’ Heaven was the place, the seat, of His government.

Now let us pass this over as we go along, that is, in that threefold way: the essential consciousness of the true Christian and of true spiritual Christianity and of the only Christianity which, as we have repeatedly said, will go through the ordeal of fire. That is something which is implanted in us at our spiritual birth and if we are not able to sense that, we ought to attend to it, for it is an essential feature of being born from above that immediately — not in its fulness — but immediately we are aware that we are related to another world, we are related to heaven. To put that round the other way, immediately we have become strangers here. The true Christian from very birth has a stranger-consciousness in this world. It may be a simple beginning, but what is true of every Christian going on in the way of Christ is that that strangerhood grows and grows and deepens all the way along until it becomes, on the spiritual side, almost impossible to live in this world. We have got to do it, it is no use trying to get out until the Lord takes you out, but you know spiritually it is becoming more and more difficult to accommodate yourself to this world, to find anything that you can call home here. Forgive the simplicity of this, but it is an important factor. It is the very witness of the truth of our Christian life, but the fact is so apparent that a vast amount of what is called Christianity has no such consciousness. It can accommodate itself to this world, and it is doing so, and moreover, it thinks hardly of those people who do not do it. The ‘Christianity’ that really does not understand Christians who cannot accommodate themselves to this world is a false and an illegitimate Christianity. If ever there was a stranger here, He was that stranger. His consciousness was altogether other and we “ought to walk as He walked”.

Again, it should be true of Christians that all their resources are in

heaven, not as a fact but as an experience, that they really are being supported and sustained out from heaven, and further, that their seat of government is in heaven. We put it before in this way, that the church has no headquarters on earth, its headquarters are in heaven, and all government is to come from heaven by the Holy Spirit. That is how He walked, and unless that is true in our case and in the case of Christians, there is something fundamentally weak and wrong and lacking, and only in so far as that is true shall we be able to stand up against the world. We have got to settle that. Is it strange to you that the world knows you not and the world is against you? Is it strange to you that you have no place here? Well, if it is, you have missed the point. It should not be strange. It is native, it is natural, it is just a part of a true position, and it is quite false to be otherwise.

### **Christ's balance**

Then a second thing about the Lord in His life here is what we will call His balance. What a balanced life was His, what a balanced walk! He was marked by a total absence of fear. He was utterly fearless and what we may call self-possessed; so steady, so rock-like, so unmoved. All the forces which ought to have broken Him broke upon Him. There is a calm serenity and tranquillity about Him that is very marked.

Then again there was no civil war inside of Him. He was a unity not a duality. There was no conflict in Himself, no internal conflict; a very important thing, a tremendously powerful thing that is spiritually.

### **Christ's universality**

And then, His universality; how comprehensive He was. He had no partialities, no biases, no prejudices. Everyone was at home with Him except hypocrites. All nations, all temperaments, all dispositions, all languages and all the ages found in Him an answer. He belonged to no one particular age. You cannot say that of other men. They were men of their own age. Sometimes they lived before their time, but the Lord Jesus has compassed all time. So it does not matter in what age you live, whatever may be the characteristic of that age — and how different are the ages! How different, for instance, in this part of the world, is the present century or part of the century from what we call the Victorian era. In the Victorian era, things were of a certain character, and now that has practically gone.

It is all so different that people today, if they want to use some kind of phrase to indicate that you are out-of-date they say, 'You are Victorian.' And so the ages change their nature, their constitution, their manner of life, their complexes, but strangely and wonderfully the Lord Jesus meets every age; He just fits in to every situation. He is the same, yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8).

And then remarkably, while some religions and teachings are very suitable to certain kinds of people and they cannot get on very well with something that does not fit into their own nationality, their own national constitution; they must have it of a national kind. For example, the Eastern cannot get on very well with the Western in the matter of religion, they must have an Eastern religion with an Eastern complex; or the Westerner cannot get on very well with the Eastern, we have our Western complex in religion. In the case of the Lord Jesus it is not at all like that. It just fits right in, whether it is China or India or Timbuktu or America — or even Britain! He fits in. He is of no specific nationality but of all. He is universal.

Then, you see, we make our gods after our own likeness, and one of the great problems of religious life is this problem of temperament, that our religion is so very largely made by our own temperament. We think God is what we think He is. We think God is what we feel He is. Other people do not feel as we do about God and they therefore have a different kind of God from ours. Our God is this one. He is made after our likeness, and so it is everywhere. Temperament is a very big factor, and it does really divide into watertight compartments and give particular and peculiar complexes. The Lord Jesus just fits into every temperament. Whether you are phlegmatic or practical or artistic or sanguine or whatever you are in temperament, He just meets your need. He comes, so to speak, to you just where you are.

He is not the Christ of the rich or the poor exclusively; He is not the Christ of the learned or the illiterate exclusively. He can meet the greatest intelligence, the highest intellectuality and beat it; and He can meet us right down there in our ignorance, in all our lack of such things. Somehow He fits in everywhere, in all classes, and so we could go on.

How comprehensive and universal He is. He is not really a Jew. He was born in Israel and a great deal has been made of the fact that He was of Jewish birth. Yes, that for specific purposes, but you cannot tie Him down to that. It does not matter what nationality it is, He just fits in. He is just as good for us in the West as He is for those in the East. That is true.

That is a mark of His life here when He was on the earth. These are true things about Christ.

Oh, does not Christianity need to take on that truth about Christ, to get rid of its prejudices, preferences, distinctions, complexes and partialities; to get rid of all its denominationalisms, all its sectarianisms, and find Christ comprehensive, gathering all, meeting all? Oh, for a church that really is after the nature of Christ in that way!

It becomes a very personal matter. We have got to be like that, we have to have a heart large enough to embrace all. We have to be much bigger than all these things of this earth — national, denominational, and all the rest — we have to be enlarged to the dimensions of Christ.

### **The secret of Christ's walk**

Now, what were the secrets of Christ's walk? Can we put our finger upon any one particular thing that gives us the secret to this life of His? I think we can, and if you will think about it even more than I am saying, take it away and dwell upon it, I think you will see that there is a very great deal more in this than I have pointed out. The secret of Christ's walk in the sense in which we have spoken of it was His utter selflessness, His utter self-unconsciousness. Think about it. It is this self-consciousness that is the root of nearly all our trouble. It is self-consciousness that makes life unbalanced. Some way or other, self-consciousness produces a state that is unbalanced. If you are not very careful and become too occupied with yourself, always drawing attention to yourself, you develop a neurosis which will make you a nuisance. Your life is unbalanced and a burden not only to yourself but to everybody else, and Christ was never that. There was nothing neurotic about the Lord Jesus. Yes, here is a strange paradox. No one perhaps ever spoke more about Himself, no one used the personal pronoun more than He did, and yet alongside of that there is this total selflessness. How utterly selfless! What a lot of ground there is for us to move in when we think of that. Oh yes, you cannot find self-interest there, you cannot find self-occupation there, you cannot find self-protection there, you cannot find self-assertiveness there, you cannot find self-importance there, you cannot find self-sufficiency there, and least of all can you find self-pity. In the day when He is passing to His cross, knowing exactly what was immediately before Him, the women of Jerusalem bewailed Him, and He said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me" (Luke 23:28), 'you need not pity Me'. He was not drawing attention

to Himself, He was not seeking pity, sympathy. No, this was the key to His balance. And this was the key to His helpfulness to all classes and all conditions, this complete absence of self-consciousness in the sense of being occupied with Himself and how things would affect Him. Oh, it is a great secret! That is how He walked.

And do you not feel that if the cross really does lie at the very root of a life, if it is true that we have come by the way of Jordan, by the way of the meaning of His baptism, then we ought to be crucified to ourselves, we ought to be dead to ourselves, we ought really to be saved from this accursed self? It is the bane, it is the root, it is the trouble, it is the core of everything. Take it to heart. I take it to heart because we are all so cursed with a self, a selfhood. It springs in in so many ways. It does affect us, this self, it really does. Let us ask the Lord about this, because it is the only way of serenity. If we are going to be affected by ourselves, we are not going to be very serene for long. It is the only way of steadiness, it is the only way of that mighty calm in the midst of storm, it is the only way of meeting situations and people who naturally have it in their power to do us a lot of harm, and to meet them, and for them to be rather under our power than we under theirs — I mean spiritually. If fear is rising, fear being a betrayal of some self-interest, some self-concern, then it spoils everything and weakens us.

So I could go round this whole thing, touching numerous points, but here it is. The secret of our Lord's walk, His mighty, influential, useful, serviceable life, was very largely because in that Jordan He had entered into the real meaning of the cross, and was able to say, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38); "not My will" (Luke 22:42). That of the personal was set aside. If it is true, it will be with us as it was with Him — we will have a wonderful ability to help everybody, to go through all situations. "The one who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:6). This is the way of the Master, this is the way for His servants, for His people.

How untouched was the Lord Jesus by such things as policy, expediency, diplomacy. The dictionary deals in a hard way with people who hold those names. It says of policy that it is statecraft. Craft indeed! The Lord Jesus was untouched by policy, what was politic. That never touched Him, never entered for an instant into His consideration — what is the political thing to do? The dictionary says of a diplomat that he is an adroit negotiator. The Lord Jesus does not fit in there. Oh, how foreign to

Him was anything like — as we say — wire-pulling, manoeuvring. Expediency — the dictionary says contriving, and this I find in my Oxford dictionary against that word ‘expediency’ — ‘more politic than principle’. That is hard on the people in that realm, but how untrue of the Lord Jesus that would be. He never resorted to expedients. He always was governed by principle. Sometimes it looks as though He was compromising, but He was not. It was a mark of the greatness of our Lord that He paid His taxes. That is, the Lord Jesus never gave unnecessary offence. Principle governed Him, not policy, not expediency, not diplomacy, not anything that would turn out for His own personal advantage, never!

I think that is something very searching for Christianity as we know it. We have to say there is a very great deal of expediency and policy and diplomacy in the Christianity that we know — manoeuvring, contriving, and doing everything it can in spiritual politics to gain position, favour and support in this world. Such considerations never came into the heart or mind of our Lord, and that is the way. God is not in the other way. You try policy and see if you find the Lord with you. You never will. Try any of these things, and you have got to get on with it, the Lord is not going with you that way. You have got to come back to this way of utter heart transparency, the transparency of heaven, nothing at all that is shady or questionable or doubtful, not even in the interests of Christian work. That is why so much of what we know by the name of ‘Christianity’ is going up in smoke in the day of the fiery ordeal. It will just vanish, it will not stand, and what we are concerned with in this message is that which will abide. We do not want to be swept away and our Christianity with us in some great testing or trial. We want to go through, to abide. Well, “the one who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same manner as He walked”, and these were the things that constituted His walk. The Lord make us walk in His ways!

## THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

*Reading: John 14:6; Acts 9:1-2; 16:17; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; Luke 22:14-23.*

We come now to the fifth of the five major features of Christ as the Way — the meaning of His sufferings and the little clause — “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Luke 22:15). The table of the Lord particularly, brings into view His sufferings. It is meant to keep His sufferings in view, and inasmuch as He gave them the cup and the loaf, He called them into fellowship with Him in His sufferings. These are not His vicarious sufferings. We have no place or part in His atoning sufferings, His redeeming sufferings. Blessed be God, He did that completely, fully, utterly alone. We can add nothing to that, and there is no need for us to add anything. It is complete and finished. But the New Testament makes it perfectly clear that there is a side of the sufferings of Christ into which we are called, what Paul calls “the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. 3:10); not atoning, not redeeming, not vicarious, but the fellowship of sufferings. We will see what those are as we go on, and what that means.

Let us understand right away that whenever we as Christians come to the Lord’s table, we are declaring that we are in the way of His sufferings. Whatever else that table may represent — and it does represent a number of other things — inclusively and pre-eminently it represents His sufferings. There is an aspect of His cup which He will offer to us to drink. There is an aspect of His brokenness into which He will bring us.

His table, the symbol and representation of His sufferings, embodies all that we have said, the whole of the five things. It sets forth His unique humanity, for it is a body which is different. It sets forth the end of an old life; it sets forth the beginning of a new, a risen life, anointed and devoted to God. It sets forth His holy and pure and heavenly walk, and it sets forth

that aspect of His sufferings which is vicarious. All that is crowded into the testimony of the Lord's table, and we have all those things before us whenever we come to the Lord's table.

### **The fellowship of Christ's suffering**

But having said that, let us come exactly to this point. When we speak of Him as the Way and when Christianity at its pure heavenly beginnings was called the Way, that way is, whatever else it is, the way of His sufferings. We need perhaps to make some little adjustment to that fact. A very selfish Gospel is being preached nowadays. The popular Gospel is the Gospel of what comes to those who will accept Christ in the way of their own personal benefits — attractions, offers, almost bribes, prizes and presents and what not; that side of things which is to anybody an attraction, what anybody naturally might want — peace, assurance of forgiveness, a way to heaven, and joy, all those things which will come to the individual who will accept Christ. Now those things may be quite true, but there may be something of a hidden deception, and it may lay the foundation for a good deal of subsequent disillusionment, not that the joy will not be forthcoming, or the peace, or the pardon, or the heaven. But it might be after a while that those who came in on that ground only would say, 'You did not let me know what I was in for; if I had known what I was in for, I probably would have thought more seriously about it; you made it too cheap.' Now the Lord Jesus never did that. Whatever He offered of pardon and peace, of joy, (and He did offer those things), He always offered them in fellowship with His sufferings, that is, He always was perfectly honest, candid, frank about this. "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27).

And in other such words at the beginning He made it perfectly clear that this was going to be no joyride to heaven. If that were all, if we left it there, of course, it might be disconcerting, it might set some back. But you see first of all, the Lord is not going to minister to our selfishness by His Christianity. Christianity is no ministrations to anyone's natural self-interest. Therefore the Gospel which Christ preached and which the apostles preached, and the Way which they presented, was no cheap way, no easy way. It was the way of suffering. It is to be noted that on every occasion when that phrase occurred in relation to Christianity in the beginning — the Way — it was connected with opposition. The very first time that it is mentioned was in connection with persecutions through Saul

of Tarsus, and what bitter and terrible persecutions they were, something that followed and haunted that man himself to his dying day. “I persecuted the church” (Gal. 1:13). “When the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving” (Acts 22:20).

When Paul said that years after, there was a sob in his throat. The way from the beginning was the way of opposition, and, I repeat, every time that it is mentioned as such it is in connection with trouble. “There occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way” (Acts 19:23). “Speaking evil of the Way” (Acts 19:9). That is the connection all the way through, the Way which is the way of suffering.

### **Fellowship in relation to the supreme purpose of God**

But we must redeem that from oppression or depression. That does not mean that gloom should at once gather over the way. This suffering, this fellowship with Christ’s suffering, is fellowship in cooperation with God and with Christ in relation to the supreme purpose of this universe. God is committed to immense things where this universe is concerned. God has committed Himself to wonderful things where this race is concerned, and God is working out those purposes and they are being worked out through the cross of the Lord Jesus; they are being worked out through the sufferings of Christ and the fellowship of His sufferings; in other words, the fellowship of God’s eternal purpose. It is to be hand in hand with God in the working out of the things of His own heart. Paul saw that; he was a man who knew something about the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings. He could say the “sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance” (2 Cor. 1:5). He could speak of, “I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” (Col. 1:24). He knew something about it and not a little, but at last right at the end he cries — “that I may know Him ... and the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. 3:10). What does he mean? Is he inviting trouble? Is he such a fire-eater? — let any suffering come, I can take it! That is not the spirit, that is not the attitude, that is not the meaning. Paul, perhaps more than anyone else, knew what God was after, what God was engaged upon, the great eternal counsels of God, and saw that because of things being as they were and are, the only way for their realization is through travail and through anguish. It is out of the pangs that the new creation will be born. “The whole creation”, said he, “groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now”; “the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the

sons of God” (Rom. 8:22,19). Out of the pangs of creation, the sons of God will be born. Paul said, ‘I share the pangs which will produce the sons; I share the travail which will bring forth to new creation, and that is a high honour; that transfigures the sufferings, that gives an altogether new angle to this way.’

Oh, that we might find the transfiguration of all the sufferings and the adversities which come to us because of the Way; that they might take on a new complex; that we might see that this which abounds unto us of the sufferings of Christ is fellowship with God in the realization of His great purpose.

### **Suffering because of Satan’s work**

But then that suffering — and there are several things to be said about that — is because of the testimony of Jesus, and the testimony of Jesus is first of all the testimony against Satan’s work in man. Satan’s one object from the beginning was to capture man, and, as we pointed out, when he gets hold of man, he will in some way or another seek to make that man feel that either in himself naturally or by his works he can be his own saviour. That is the glory of man in the place of the glory of Christ. Glorifying man has ever been Satan’s object; to make something, yes, to make everything, of man, so to work for the exaltation and glorification and inflation of man that at last the great superman comes as the incarnation of Satan himself.

When Jesus comes and says that whole manhood and humanity is finished, that God is no longer going to make anything of that man, that natural man, that God has brought in another Man and that kingdom that Satan has hold of for his own ends is at an end, that God has no place for it, do you think Satan likes that? See what it cuts from under his feet, see what a tremendous thing that is when all the ground of Satan’s hopes and purposes and intrigues is simply swept away, and Jesus stands to declare another kind of man in whom God is interested. Therefore if we stand for the other Man and with the other Man and on the ground of that different Man in which Satan has no place at all, we are in for it. By any means Satan will spoil us, will mar us, will break us, will put us out, and that is the fellowship of His sufferings. It is the sufferings which come because Satan cannot get hold of that Man, cannot do anything with that Man, but he is going to do his best to spoil those who are in the way of that Man, to put that creation out of the way.

Again, on the positive side, the testimony of Jesus (that is the testimony in Himself, what He is) is the testimony of God's eternally conceived and purposed destiny for His man. "You make him to rule over the works of Your hands" (Ps. 8:6); "You have put all things in subjection under his feet" (Heb. 2:8). Satan says, 'Not if I can help it, I will have him under my feet.' God's destiny in Christ as representing this new manhood and God's destiny eternally determined for all who are of Jesus Christ, the new manhood — that means that Satan's kingdom is going, that means that his rule has its end secured, that means the time is coming when this Man, Christ Jesus, and this corporate man in Christ Jesus, is going to have the pre-eminence, is going to reign together with Him, and that reign is not just something official, it is spiritual, it is moral. It means that all enemies shall be put under His feet and under theirs, and you can quite clearly see that the enemy will postpone that as long as he can, will do everything to make it hard for those who are eventually going to oust him and his kingdom. So it is a suffering way.

And did he not with Him Who is the way, try to turn Him aside by any means, by subtle tricks, by friends, and by opposition and suffering, from being that great predestined Head of a new eternal kingdom, to stop Him from going to the cross to accomplish it? The way of suffering is the way of its accomplishment and its realization.

### **Suffering because of misunderstanding**

Then the sufferings of Christ are seen to be so much in the realm of the complete impossibility of the world to understand, and that includes the religious world. One thing that the world, the natural man, desires, is to be understood. The most difficult thing for anybody is to be misunderstood or un-understood. Oh, how we naturally long to be understood! "For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him" (1 John 3:1). And there is a great deal of suffering bound up with the world being entirely unable to understand. You will never be able to explain yourself to the satisfaction of the world if you go on with the Lord Jesus. You will carry about something hidden in your own heart which others who have not gone your way will never understand. It will be the suffering of a lonely way so far as the whole world outside of Christ is concerned. "You ... will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me" (John 16:32 NKJV). But there was something of a pang in His voice when He said that. "You will leave Me alone", you just

will not be able to understand. How true it was even of His closest friends and disciples; they could not understand why He should go to the cross, and why He should accept the cross, why He should not do everything to avoid and evade it, to escape it. They begged Him, they pleaded with Him, not to go that way. They could not understand. For them every hope was dashed should He go to the cross. He had to go His lonely way without one person being able to understand. There may have been sympathy, there may have been pity, but there was no understanding. And that is always the way of those who are going right on with the Lord. You will always find that even amongst Christians if you are going right on with the Lord, there are many who will not understand. They can go so far and they do not know why it is you will not stop there, why you will go that bit further. Yes, it is a lonely way, and that is a large part of the suffering.

### **Suffering because of prejudice**

The way that Jesus took was the way which encountered the blind prejudice and pride of the whole religious world, which would not come under the government of the Spirit of God, the world which would govern itself by its own judgments and standards — that was the religious world of His time. And it is the religious world of our time, that which is not wholly governed by the Holy Spirit and therefore not wholly open to all the thought of God that will be marked by prejudices, by pride, by a closedness, to a great deal which it will not have, is not prepared to accept. For such as are going the whole way — and this is not just a statement of a theory, it is the borne-out experience of many — they will encounter their chief prejudice and opposition from religious people themselves. They will find less sympathy in that realm than even in the world. Is that true? It is true. The Book from which one speaks is a very large volume of history, the history of those who have set their faces to go in this way wholly. Yes, prejudice and pride and jealousy and envy and much more of that kind, and it creates a great state of suffering. You just have to get on in spite of it and suffer because of it.

I do not think I need enlarge upon this any more. All I have said and all that I could say would simply resolve itself into this — the Way, as in the case of Christ personally and in the case of the church and Christianity at its beginning is a way of suffering. It will be that for all those who are going to identify themselves with the Way, but that suffering in the Way in fellowship with the Lord Jesus is infinitely fruitful suffering.

## **Fruitful suffering**

It is tremendously impressive when you just stand back and think of it, that here is a throne, not necessarily a literal throne, but a throne, a centre of universal government and supremacy, a glorious throne. Around that throne are ever-widening circles from the immediate circle to larger and larger circles until you get a great multitude out of every nation and tongue and kindred, a multitude which no man can number, all in the ecstasy of their full redemption realised and possessed, all in the glory of a mighty triumph, all now in fellowship with the supreme universal Lord, and that Lord is a Lamb in the midst of the throne. It has all come from the offering of the Lamb, it is all out from His sufferings. The Lamb of sacrifice always speaks of suffering. But look, from the heart of things where there is the symbol of suffering, the Lamb, the whole universe is full of glory and praise and worship and adoration. The language being used around that throne is not human language. Human language is defeated in its effort to set forth the worship that you find around that throne. Yes, by way of suffering. Ah yes, it is not all in vain. If that is a true revelation of the fruit of suffering, it is not in vain; and if that is true, then it is worth our having some fellowship in it. It was not fruitless suffering. It was not suffering to desolation. It was suffering to glory. "... if indeed we suffer with Him, so that we may also be glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:17).

*Concluded.*