



*the
Golden
Candlestick*

**THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE
IN CHRIST JESUS**

Part 3

**C.J.B. Harrison
H. Foster**

Volume 169

HEAVENLY VISION

C.J.B. Harrison

Reading: Ezekiel 1; Revelation 4; Ephesians 1:9-11.

*“... the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.”
“After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven ...”.*

Our great need, our supreme need, is heavenly vision. You will remember that both in the case of Ezekiel and in the case of John on Patmos, the conditions on the earth and among the people of God were desperate. The earth was in a desperate state. Everything visible was in confusion. Men did not know which way to turn. Even among the people of God things were bad. Things were desperate and, in those two parallel situations, the heavens opened. The opening of heaven always means that. It means the unveiling, the allowing of a servant of God, or servants of God, to see what the situation really is from the divine standpoint; to know heaven's estimate of things.

Notice that a door opened. Here is the thing which all are looking upon, and then a door is opened and something else comes into view. It is another set or scale of values altogether. Things as God sees them but not the things here as God sees them, I do not mean that. No, the opening of heaven is the allowing of a glimpse of what God is after, what God is doing, what God is intending. We could write over this first chapter of Ezekiel, with all its extraordinary features and all its baffling details — one word over its significance — and the word is *purpose*. You can write one word over Revelation 4 and it is the same word — *purpose*.

The Revised Version brings out the meaning of the original language very well in that last verse of Revelation 4. Why was everything brought into existence; why were all things created? The answer is, “because of Your will”. Because of an intention that God had, He brought everything into being. Notice that the creation itself was not the end; it was unto an end. Not, ‘Your will was creation’, but “because of Your will they were,

and were created”; God having something in view to which He had been moving before times eternal and that is a long time before the creation was brought in. That was something that just swallows up the creation, as part of the process “because of Thy Will”. You can write that ‘Will’ with a very big ‘W’.

This will concerns the end God intended from the beginning. He brought everything into being for that one end. Of course, the ending of Ezekiel 1 gives us some conception as to the ultimate purpose of God in the phrase, “the glory of the Lord”. Both ultimately in the ages to come and in the earlier phase of the glory of the Lord — the phase when the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea — the end of God (both the ultimate and on the way to the ultimate) is the glory of the Lord. It is God’s glory. The true end of man is that everything should say, “glory”. What an inglorious state of things there now is. Praise the Lord for the sunshine, but it is a cursed world, it will probably be raining quite soon. But God’s end is glory and glory is when everything of that other kind has altogether gone and it just blazes with what God is. Well, when we have all got a perpetual hallelujah in our hearts what an unqualified day of glory that will be. If we are longing for it, He is longing for it. He is the God of glory. He is not just accepting the state of things in which we find ourselves.

So this tremendous vision of the eternal purpose of God can be summed up in the glory of the Lord, when the Lord is gloriously in everything. That is the answer to everything. When a thing really is of the Lord does not our heart leap? We say, ‘Well, that was the Lord.’ Something He does for us, or something we meet in another child of God, something that is not in them naturally. It just happens and you know it is the Lord. Little things of love and protection; perhaps what we call ‘little things’ but we know they are from the Lord. They are thrilling things. A little thing is great when the Lord is in it and one day it is all going to be the Lord.

The glory of the Lord. Yes, but you notice what it says. It was the *likeness* of the glory of the Lord. This is what it is like. All this extraordinary vision of glory, of wheels and cherubim and fire and eyes and creatures with faces; yes, they are principles of the glory of the Lord. It wasn’t just a lovely, pleasant, sentimental thing. As our brother has been saying, there are ‘laws’ of glory. It doesn’t just happen. There are divine principles and ways. It happens along divinely ordered principles and ways. And when heaven opens we see a whole lot of things which make

up the mind of God and He wants to open our eyes to see what the principles of the glory are; what the principles of the purpose are, that we may be wholly in line with what He is after. We may have warped, mistaken and puny ideas of the glory because all our thoughts are so far below His thoughts. He wants to lift us up into His thoughts of the glory and the purpose and so we come to this in Ezekiel 1. What is it that governs everything in the purpose of God?

What is the really governing thing of this vision? As we begin to see it spiritually it is not nearly such a muddle as we thought because there is something that governs the whole of it. The all-governing factor of the divine purpose is a Man. When you have got to the end here is the great movement of the Spirit: those wheels which speak of divine purpose going on its way go straight forward; they turned not as they went. I am so glad God doesn't turn as He goes. He goes straight on. People may turn and drop out of the way; people may miss the way, but God goes straight on. Oh, how urgent that we shall be so linked with Him that we may go straight on when He goes straight on! The wheels go straight on but we may not be with those wheels.

God is so longing to bring us into the full meaning of conformity to purpose; to bring us into line with His first thought for us. I do hope our desire is: "Oh, Lord, at any cost I want to be in the first will of God, even if my dearest thoughts, my most cherished ambitions, my whole conception as to my life and calling must be set aside. Lord, break right in and get me onto the main issue." But what a great thing it is when we realise that our way will never reach God's end. If you do not want to be in the end, well, you won't be. But God will reach His end without us and some will be with Him at the end. Do you mean all children of God won't be saved? No, but being saved isn't the same as reaching God's end. Being saved means you will be "saved so as by fire". You will not go to hell; you will be in heaven. Well, praise the Lord, 'there is life for a look at the Crucified One'. Not very difficult, is it? But we are talking about purpose. "Whom He foreknew, them He foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Oh, that there might be reproductions of the Son of God brought through to reign with Him; to be with Him in His tremendous end!

Yes, the wheels go on their way, but how easy it is for us to be on some other course than the way of the first purpose of God. I feel the Holy Spirit wants to press that, dear friends. I think the Lord wants to awaken us out of a partial sleep, out of something lesser so that we say, "Lord,

as for me, I desire the thing that matters to You.”

Ezekiel further says: “Above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of the throne and upon the likeness of the throne ... was the likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above.” “A man upon it above”. Here is the whole divine scheme of things. We don’t need any reminders as to who the Man must be. There is only one Man who is “far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but in that which is to come”. Who is that Man? There is a Man in the glory and that is the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus. “Wherefore God has highly exalted Him and has given Him the name which is above every name that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow ...”. The Man, the Son of God, is the heart of the divine intention and we have only to come over into the New Testament and see what the apostle Paul has to say and it is enlarged continually.

One of the most tremendous statements about the Lord Jesus, the Person of Christ, is found in the words: “In Him were all things created ... and in Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:16,17). If Christ ceases, everything disintegrates; everything holds together because of Christ. It would all break up, it would all vanish away, but for Him.

“All things were created through Him.” John says, “... without Him was not anything made that was made”. Where are you without Christ? “All things were created through Him”, but also, “unto Him”. The authorised version says, “for Him”. Everything was brought into existence for Christ; in order that Christ may be expressed, Christ may be known. Now that is a very big thing but it comes down to something about Him as to His character and nature. It means that God has found One that corresponds to all His good pleasure; and God’s pleasure and God’s delight and purpose are first of all centred in a kind of Person. God is personal. And God required a man, a living, sentient, intelligent being to express Himself. “Let us make man in our image.” We can’t go into the mystery as to why God required to be manifested and revealed in man form, but He so chose and His Man is His Beloved Son and He is the topstone of everything that matters to God. Things come under the Person. There are quite a lot of things in creation, but the Person is the head of them all, just as in the first creation Adam was the head of creation. Just as everything took shape from Adam, when Adam fell the whole creation fell. The animal creation and the vegetable creation fell; everything went wrong when the head was wrong. When the head is right everything else is right.

So God begins with a Man, His beloved Son. Now, with that, we need

to hurry on to the New Testament and see what Paul says. God's will which He has made known in the dispensation of the fulness of times is to sum up all things in Christ. Everything is going to be according to His beloved Son. It is all going to be Christ. Well now, that, in its first practical application to us, is perhaps familiar but the point is that the man who is not Christ — in other words what you and I are naturally — is the kind of person to whom God has said, 'No.' He has repudiated that creation altogether because of sin and He has brought in the Firstborn of a new creation. Only in Christ can you and I be acceptable to God. Only in Christ do you and I come into the divine purpose and that, of course, begins when we are born again. We leave the ground of destruction and judgment and God's utter repudiation and we come onto the ground of acceptance. "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is in Christ that we move onto the ground of the reality of acceptance with God. But as we have said, God is not content with the initial coming into Christ; His desire is to bring us into the *fulness* of Christ ever increasingly.

Therefore the Man governs everything, but we move from the Man personal to this matter of the living creatures. "And this was their appearance, they had the likeness of a man ... as for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man." Do you notice the strange mixture of the singular and the plural? "They had the face of a man." The four had the face — not faces. Yes, and what about the four different features: the ox, the lion, the man and the eagle? Well, we do not need to look very far to see that these are features characteristic of the one Man. They are a glimpse of Christ in His fourfold character. The Lord Jesus is the lion. The lion speaks of kingly dominion, power. He is the King. "The lion of the tribe of Judah". The ox speaks of His patience, His sufferings, sacrifice, lowliness, submission, labour. Is that true of Him? "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life ...". The man, yes, He is the Son of Man. He is the human person; He is the One who became us and was made in the likeness of men. He is the man, and then He is indeed the eagle; the heavenly one, the one who is not of this world; the one who is the Son of God; the altogether other one, and He is not only altogether other, but He is one of us. You see four different aspects which are all true. How can a king be a servant? How can a lion be an ox? You have got to look at the Lord Jesus to see all those things are true. They are all true and the Holy Spirit, who caused the Word of God to

be written, gives us this revelation. And why does He say the same thing to John in Revelation in the Isle of Patmos hundreds of years later? Do you think John was reading Ezekiel? I think he was far too much in the heavenlies!

He saw these four living creatures just as Ezekiel saw them. Therefore it is an eternal fact; it was not fancy. The Lord Jesus is that. And the Holy Spirit takes pains to say that their likeness was not the likeness of men. Not men, but the Man. And here is your vision. A tremendous thing, this Christ corporate. "They ... a man." How can 'they' be a 'man'? Christ corporate. This is a tremendous purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord and the apostle saw it, and saw us in Him.

"In Him, we also ..."; a wonderful phrase in Ephesians 1. Not in ourselves, but in Him. "In whom also we have an inheritance ...". What is Christ corporate, the church? That brings us to a very vital point, that bound up with the deepest, central purpose of God is Christ corporate. Not Christ in isolation, but Christ in us, and we in Christ; the body of Christ which is the church; the church which is His Body. How much are you and I bound up with our bodies? Well, pretty thoroughly, and the Lord says the church is His Body. That is where He lives; that is where He is. That is how He is manifesting and seeks to manifest Himself. What a tragedy, in the light of the heavenly glory, is the disintegrated state of the church, His Body. What disjointed members! How much of Christ's glory fills His members so that they are in actually functioning as the Body of Christ? How many really are throbbing with His life, speaking His words, thinking His thoughts? When they come together is He filling the vessel that is there? Is it Christ when they come together? You don't first meet them; you meet Christ. You meet His love, gentleness, meekness, humility. That is what we are here for; that is God's full thought.

God's Will (that Will with a great capital 'W'), is Christ and the church. What is the mystery which the apostle saw? His eyes were opened to see that Christ has been mediated to His members upon the earth and they are here to manifest the glory of the Lord. They are not here for anything else. They are here to be delivered out of themselves into Another; that is heavenly union with Christ Himself.

Oh, that we had time and even the capacity to go into the details found in Ezekiel. Do you notice that their wings were joined one to another? When they moved, they moved in tremendous power and freedom and yet they never moved apart or independently. They all moved together and everyone went straight forward and the going straight forward was a

mighty unison of movement in one direction which they all pursued. It was the one life and the one course. There is nothing detached about the cherubim, nothing detached about this corporate expression of Christ. If anything is utterly joined it is this. “That there be no schism in the Body.” “I ... beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love ... for there is one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling.” Yes, central to the divine purpose is a heavenly, living, mighty, corporate expression of the Lord Himself, the church. And how is that to be realised? Well, we come over to the New Testament and the burden, particularly Paul’s burden, was to get the fulness of Christ into the saints, to bring the saints to the “measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”. That is why there is a note of such grief with him when he writes his epistles. “You have heard of the conflict I have had for you.” He says of the Galatians, “I am afraid for you.” He says of the Ephesians, who were blessed saints, “I cease not to pray for you.” If we hear of saints like the Ephesians whose faith in the Lord Jesus and love for one another was known everywhere, we would say, “They do not need praying for. They are a blessed lot of saints.” He praised the Lord for the measure that there was, but he said, “I cease not to pray for you that your eyes may be opened that you may see what your heavenly calling really is.” It is to live on earth but, like Abraham, clear of it all and where it is all in Christ — no longer doctrine or things or people. Where are they in the realm of the heavens? They have gone a long time ago! It is all Christ up here. “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh.” Even the cross, the mighty, redemptive work of the Son of God is unto one end. It is to deliver us altogether from that whole old state of things — that defeated, ruined universe, and through death and resurrection with Him to bring us into a new realm altogether. The cross is not just to take our sins away and then to leave us floundering and still living our own self-centred life. No, the cross is a mighty deliverance from what we are, and we need emancipating out of what we are into what Christ is, as those who live and walk in living union with the Lord. That is the vision, the heavenly vision. To what extent any of us have entered into it may be a matter of degree, but we need to be moving in that direction and that brings me to the next thing.

We notice in the margin that the Spirit of life was in the wheels. I do not know whether Paul looked in the margin before he wrote Romans 8:2, but anyway there it is! The Spirit of life was in the wheels. Just where is

the Spirit of life? It is in the wheels, not in a lot of things dotted all over the place. The Spirit of life is along that line and it is amazing how when you and I move out of our own line onto God's line, the Spirit of life is there. We tell young Christians that you cannot take the Lord Jesus with you to certain places. You have to go where He goes. But when we think we are further on we are always trying to get the Holy Spirit to back up our work for the Lord. He will leave us floundering. He says, "You leave your things and come into My things and I will be there." People are trying to work up revival and produce something in their own little corners and it never quite seems to work, does it? Isn't the Lord patient! Isn't He quiet! Can't you almost hear the silence! The Lord is waiting for us to ask Him what He really wants, instead of our asking Him to do what we think He should. The Lord is saying: "What I am waiting for is for them to come and say, like the apostle on the Damascus road, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' "

Some of us remember when we got to the end of our Christian tether and realised it did not really work. I wish people would come to that more quickly! So often nothing much happens and yet there is an idea that somehow in the end the Lord will be pleased. What an awful shock if the Lord says at the end: "What have you been doing all the time? Well, I never wanted you to do any of it." Some of us have reached the end of our Christian tether and we have realised that even if a few people did get saved through our efforts they did not get on very well. There was not very much spiritual increase or character in their lives. There was something unsatisfactory about their progress. Of course, people were saved, a few people came to the Lord, and we praise Him for that, but that was not the power of God; it seemed to be just scraping the surface.

When at last we say, "Well, Lord, what is it that you really want?" It is a surprising thing that He says — "I want you to be out of it! To get out of My way, to stop and let Me do things." Does this mean that I am to be on the shelf? "Yes, don't try and do things for Me; I will do them." And when that experience comes, none of us like it. "What a terrible thing! What am I to do now?" Yes, it is like that and there is a tremendous fight. Our testimony is that we did not like it a bit when the test came but somehow there was a quiet arrangement with the Lord that it had got to be and we said, "Well, Lord, if you don't carry me through, not much is going to happen, but I am willing for you to have your way about it."

"Except it die it abides by itself alone ...". 'If it die'. It is the dying that is so difficult. "If it die ... much fruit." What a contradiction of what

we thought! We thought we knew such a lot. We thought that if there was plenty of energy and we could give things out to people there would be much fruit. Not at all — “If it die ...”. And the Holy Spirit will take pains to bring the cross to bear upon every element, every detail of that natural make-up which stands in the way of God. It is in three realms that our strength lies and I am going to briefly mention them: heart, mind and will.

1) The heart.

What do you really want? What is your heart really set upon? That is a question which takes time to sort out so that we discover something of what our desires and motives really are. Perhaps it is that we want to be used in the Lord’s service, and He says, “I do not want you to be used; I want to do something quite different.” And then the heart is found to be set upon its own ways and a battle ensues. It doesn’t happen in five minutes but the Holy Spirit begins to win our hearts to the Lord; to disillusion us and to cause us to let go. “My son, give Me your heart.” Have you ever really got alone and said, “Lord, what I really want is Yourself.” Because that is a very big point in your life. It is a big transition and crisis. But if you and I really say, “Lord, I want You”, well, heaven has recorded that and says, “This man wants Christ.” And then the Holy Spirit will say, “Yes, and this is not Christ and that is not Christ.” And very gently He will begin to disentangle our hearts from this and that and all that is not Christ. But oh, the increasing joy of the release from other things and other people! What a lot of lives are ruined by clinging to another person, ambition or work. So God comes into the affairs of the heart, but not to make us miserable; it is resurrection. That is the point of the cross: to set you free. Yes, there may be suffering for a little while but there is resurrection.

2) The mind

We all have a mind that has its own content, its own make-up. For instance, it is easy to have a tradition of the Word of God that is a blinding thing to heavenly life; something that holds our minds about things. And the cross comes and begins to break up our little world which we were so sure about. Tradition dies very hard. But the Holy Spirit begins to deal with our thoughts and our minds about this. So often we have found ourselves so sure about things because the Lord has ‘shown us’, but we were quite wrong, and there has to be the renewing of the mind which follows our utter committal to the Lord.

3) *The will*

Finally, the will is the deciding factor where I decide that the Lord is to be first and I say, 'Yes.' Now the cross applied in that way makes way for the Holy Spirit to hold us into the full ranges of the purpose of God and that is what He wants to do, to lead us on from glory to glory. How easy to have had a little glory and to think that we have had the whole lot. Well, the Lord isn't going to leave us there. The Spirit of life is in the wheels, and the Lord is challenging every one of us to come onto the ground of committal to His purpose in Christ, His beloved Son, that the Holy Spirit may be increasingly known as the Spirit of life in our whole experience. The spirit of life is in the wheels.

I will close with this. The Man of Ezekiel leads on very soon to the House. You have not gone far with the Man before you see the House. Of course, the House is simply Christ corporate again. But the governing factor of the House, of life together, is always this one thing, the measure of Christ, how much the Man is in it! You take the whole matter of our problems in the things of the Christian life: such things as witness, ministry, testimony, prayer, fellowship, the Lord's table, assembly life, etcetera. Even ministry can be a perfectly lifeless machinery, because the life and the meaning of it all is Christ, simply Christ. The ministries were given from heaven by the ascended Lord for the edifying of the Body of Christ and that doesn't mean edifying people. We made a mistake. We thought that people had to be edified. Not at all! People have to have a bad time. It is *Christ* who is to be edified. There must be room for the Lord to expand and ministry is unto that: to produce a greater measure of Christ and only as we have an increasing measure of Christ have we anything for one another. The issue is how much of Christ we have. Oh, this thought of the purpose is such a big thing and it does come down to some very practical matters! God's purpose in our home life and in our work is always to have that Man in the glory being brought in in greater measure. It is the impact of that Man on the throne being brought in in greater measure and all God's dealings with us are to make room for the Man. Christ supreme; Christ personally as Lord of our life in everything and then capitulating to Christ corporate. We must get away from the independent, self-occupied, self-governed line of things and say, "Lord, I want to be conformed to the image of your Son, together with all saints. I want to lose my identity, as it were, in the corporate expression of Christ. I want to come in with something of the Lord." We soon realise how little of the Lord we really have, but if God is set upon Christ He is going to

bring forth Christ in us. Isn't that everything? We are very conscious of our slowness and what a mess we are, but the Holy Spirit, who is here to glorify Christ, once we take sides with Him, works much more quickly. Once we say 'yes' to the Lord He is able to do a quick work; "Lord, take things in hand to work that which Your heart is set upon."

It is not a case of having an ideal place to meet in, but of how you are going on with the Lord in the full desire of His heart so that the Lord Jesus is glorified. The Lord will show us what is involved and if our heart is really yielded to Him we won't waste time.

Well, may the Lord Himself help us to see that these great things are not detached and miles away but they apply to us.

The Lord is bent on bringing us into the purpose of God in Christ and we need, as a people, to leave those other and lesser grounds and commit ourselves fully to that upon which God is set and to count upon the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of life, to bring us each into our place in the divine pattern.

Conference messages by C.J.B. Harrison concluded

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS

H. Foster

Reading: Psalm 133.

We have been thinking together of the glorious fact that the seed, the secret of all the divine purpose, is deposited in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit. We have seen that, in order for that full purpose to be realised, the Spirit must have His way, and that is not a capricious way, nor, to those who are enlightened of the Lord, is it a mysterious way. It is a way which operates according to set spiritual principles; regular, fixed, divine laws, and it is called: "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus".

The threefold aspect of that law of which we need to be aware in order that we may cooperate with the Spirit in His work is, first of all, resurrection, illustrated by Abraham, a man of the Spirit; secondly, exaltation, ascendancy, the Lordship of Christ, illustrated by another great man of the Spirit, Joshua; and the third, which we will describe as fellowship. The man who best illustrates this truth is David, another great man of the Spirit.

The purpose of the presence of the Spirit of God with us is to minister life. That life is resurrection life; that life is the life of the ascended Lord — it is throne life; and that life is also corporate life; it is Christ's life. We have to keep the rules if we want to know the fulness of blessing. The Spirit does not merely begin at the cross; He keeps us very close to the cross all the way to glory, if we let Him and if we obey Him. He does not merely come into our lives when we appreciate the glory of the fact that our Lord is a risen Lord, though that is the beginning, but all our life long He works with us, holding us, bringing us back to the fact that the Lord is Lord right through to the end when we will see Him face to face. So in this matter of fellowship, all the time the Holy Spirit is working with us on the basis that He has come not merely to deal with us as individuals and bring us to glory, but to unite us in one body and to bring us all to glory together.

Now, I cannot begin to talk about David until we have first of all considered a difficult problem: the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is not a

time when we expect to find help from mere doctrinal or theological exposition. This is so misunderstood in general among the Lord's people, and so very pertinent to the matter we have in hand, that I feel constrained to draw your attention to what the Word says, and ask you to try and forget what you have thought about this matter up until now.

The baptism *in* the Spirit is spoken of seven times in Scripture. Each of the four gospels in their opening chapters mentions the promise — and that is significant. When all four gospels say something, it is time to pay special attention to that matter. They all, in slightly different language, bring forth the promise uttered by John the Baptist — “I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire” (Matt. 3:11). That One came, He lived among them, He taught, He blessed them, they believed on Him. They walked with Him, served Him, but they did not know the baptism. When we open the book of the Acts, which is, of course, the fifth book of the New Testament, we find that the Lord Himself, after His resurrection and immediately before His ascension, raises this matter again with the disciples, and says to them, “John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence” (Acts 1:5) — only ten days, to be precise. That focuses very clearly on the immediate fulfilment of the promise. The day of Pentecost came and the disciples had a wonderful experience. The word ‘baptism’ is not mentioned in the narrative of that day’s happenings, but when the complementary half of Pentecost took place, namely among the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius at Caesarea, Peter, describing that day, says words to this effect: ‘It was exactly what happened to us at Pentecost, and I remembered the word that the Lord had said, “Ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit” ’(Acts 11:16). That is all that is said as to an historic occasion of its happening. It was promised; the promise was narrowed down to a definite time, and looking back on it, Peter could say, ‘that was the day when it happened’.

You find nothing more in the narrative of the fact, but you have one illuminating verse in the doctrinal explanation of it. “For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). That is the baptism — “baptized into one body”. Baptized, as the promise read, *in* (it does not say ‘into’) the Holy Spirit, but the comparison, or, if you like, the contrast, is ‘baptized in water’. Now, when you were baptized in water, you were not filled with water, you were put into water, and

that is what the word means. There has been a lot of theological discussion, but as far as I know, the simple term means ‘to dip into’. If there had not been complicated and inconvenient facts associated with that, I do not think there would have been any question about the meaning of the word. It means to be introduced into another realm. We do not live in water; we live in air. When we are baptized, we are dipped into another realm. Naturally, we do not live in the realm of the Spirit, we live in the realm of the flesh, but “in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body”. It is a new realm, a new world that we live in. You know the familiar Pauline phrase “in Christ” and what that means. “*In Christ*”. Well, there it is, seen from another point of view: “*in the Holy Spirit*”. It is a new realm that we are brought into.

At Pentecost not only were the disciples brought into the new realm, but the new realm was brought into them, and though you are not filled with water when you are baptized, they were filled with the Holy Spirit. And they were filled over again very soon. Men who are spoken of as men filled with the Holy Spirit were filled again. “We ... were all made to drink of one Spirit” — not merely that we are brought into something, but something is brought into us. That is the complementary truth.

We need to get this very clear that at Pentecost a new realm of life was brought into being. The church did not wait for you and me to be born, or to be saved, or to be baptized for it to be brought into being. The church came into being at Pentecost. I used to think, because I did not read my Bible properly, that Pentecost was the beginning of the harvest, but when I read my Bible properly, I found that Pentecost is the end of the ‘heap’ harvest. The Old Testament picture of this act of God that took place on that day is the Harvest-home, all gathered in. Spiritually, in the person of Christ, the church is realised, and I am sure that it was back to that day and to that event that the apostle was directing the Corinthians when he said, not, ‘Some of us were baptized into one body and the others had better get busy and pray that that may be’; but, “we were all baptized into one body”, just as we were all baptized into Christ in His death in the purpose of God. It is for us, of course, to enter experimentally into the truth that when Christ died, I died. It is for us to enter experimentally into the truth that when Christ arose, I rose. And it is for us to enter into the truth that when the church was formed and the realm of the Holy Spirit introduced in which men might live, I, by faith in Christ enter into that realm.

Now the confusion results from the fact that various things happened

on the day of Pentecost, and we are not going to consider all of them, but we take fresh note of this fact that on that day the Spirit came to create a sphere, a new realm, in which redeemed men were to live: the realm of the Spirit. You know what it is to live in the realm of the flesh, to live in the realm of this world. That is not theology, that is very practical. You know what it means to be in the flesh. There is another experience — to be in the Spirit, and that is a realm in which to live and that is a realm provided for us in Christ. As the gracious work went on of calling men to repentance and to faith, it was not a new church that was being formed here and there, it was that men were being brought into *the* church. They came to realise that their salvation not only meant that the Lord had given to them the gift of His Son to live in their hearts, but had brought them, by the Holy Spirit, to live in a new world which is Christ. We are all in one body if we are in Christ. How we need to know the reality of the Spirit's work to live according to where we are.

And this is right in line with what I have been saying on other occasions, that our experience of the Spirit is that all the time, if we are obedient to Him, He keeps bringing us back to the same laws. We cannot get away from them if we want to keep in fullest association with Him. We cannot say, I was filled with the Spirit when I came to the cross so many years ago; I have left the cross behind! Then you have left the Holy Spirit behind too, because He will always bring us to the cross. When we came into Christ, we came into this realm of the body, and if the Holy Spirit has His way He will always be working with us according to that law, the law of fellowship, the law of relatedness, the law of our corporate life, for that is the nature of our baptism.

So when men were saved, they found that their salvation brought them into the church and it also brought them into a very gracious and full experience of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ working in all His members to relate them, and true spiritual life is a matter of the body of Christ. The law of the body is the law of life.

You can see that from the reverse side in the case of the Corinthians, who were not acting according to the body. As the apostle describes it in that well-known passage in 1 Corinthians 11, they were not discerning the Lord's body; and that does not merely apply to certain irregularities which were taking place when they took the literal element in their hands, but it applies to the fact that there were schisms among them. "I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it" (1 Cor. 11:18). Then the apostle goes on to say that that failure to discern and to act according

to the principles of the body of Christ, was bringing trouble — not theoretical trouble, church discipline, but practical suffering in their lives. “For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep” (1 Cor. 11:30). For which cause? Because they have not discerned the Lord’s body. In the previous chapter the apostle explains that that matter of the loaf is not just the Lord’s body in the sense of the person of Jesus Christ, the Saviour, who as the Bread of Life gave Himself for us, upon whom we feed as individuals and concerning whom that element of bread speaks. He is not merely speaking of the fact that not discerning the Lord’s body means a contradiction of that personal relationship with the Lord, but “we are one loaf” (1 Cor. 10:17). There is far more in that loaf than just your personal relationship with the Lord. It is not a personal, individual, isolated monopoly, but a common participation — a communion — you and you and you and all of us in the body of Christ.

Now then, you have a share in that, and yet you are at variance with your brother. There are divisions, rivalries, jealousies, emulations, there is pride, competition, criticism. You are contradicting the very Spirit who is in you! And it is an incredible thing that these men with the gifts of the Spirit were contradicting the law of the Spirit. Their very gifts, their eloquence, the signs and wonders and the things that they did that they were so proud of, became the occasion of rivalry. It merits a great deal of thoughtful, prayerful consideration by at least some of us, and, in lesser or greater degrees, all of us, that it is possible that the very gifts of the Spirit become an occasion of pride or division, and therefore of contradiction of the essential purpose of the Holy Spirit in the church, which is to unite us into one body in Christ. That is the supreme matter.

My difficulty in speaking of the previous two aspects of the law of the Spirit has been that it is all the time they are incomplete unless they are associated most intimately with this law of related life. The cross has only a very partial meaning apart from the House. The Lordship of Christ can only truly be applied to us in this matter of relatedness. All the time I have had to hold something back that in a sense ought to have come first. This is the point that I am sure that the Lord wants to impress upon us: the most sacred purpose and intention of the Holy Spirit’s presence among God’s people, in your life and mine, the thing that matters, that will last when time is no more and churches are forgotten and eternity comes into view, the thing that will matter most will be our united relationship with Christ by the Holy Spirit.

What a sad and shameful thing to the Lord that the most zealous,

well-intentioned, earnest children of God do get such a misconception of the Holy Spirit that all the time they are contradicting His most sacred purpose. That is terrible. Yes, but these things always come back on us; they did on the Corinthians. Of course, what we have not been enlightened about, the Lord graciously overlooks, but when we have been enlightened, the Lord holds us to it, and the Corinthians had been enlightened. They did not have the awful muddle into which Christendom has degenerated today, and, while they began with many handicaps, in that they came out of awful, pagan, moral darkness, they had come into a clean, separate thing when they came into Christ and therefore the Lord held them to it. They knew, or should have known, that they were baptized into one body, members one of another and of Christ. The apostle says, 'You are breaking the rules, you are sowing corruption and you are reaping it.' "For this cause many among you are weak and sickly." You see, this is the law of spiritual *life*. Life is involved in this law, and life suffers when the law is broken. It may not be actual sickness; the Lord is very gracious in the way that He allows things to come to us. But I have chosen that, not as bringing to you a word of condemnation, but as an illustration of the opposite. If breaking the law means forfeiting life, then keeping the law means enjoying life.

So you come over to James 5:14: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." This is not the gift of healing although I believe there was a gift of healing. If you ask me if there is today, my answer is that I have never seen it, nor heard of any authentic case of it. The Lord has healed me, but I am talking about the gift of healing which is a different matter. We are not going to discuss whether the Lord can heal or not. Of course He can when it pleases Him and it is for His glory to do so.

It says, "Call for the elders of the church." Now, the elders of the church are not men of any specific gift in the realm of gifts. An elder may be a prophet or a preacher; but he may not be. That is a comfort to you if you are an elder! An elder is a position of honour in administering in the house of the Lord. He may have all the gifts, he may have any one of them. He need not be a preacher, he need not have any of the special gifts, he need not be an evangelist, and he need not have the gift of healing. Of course, he may, but it is rather risky for James to say, "Call for the elders", if you do not know whether your elder has the gift of healing or not! He does not say, 'Enquire if they have the gift of healing and if so, call them.'

There may have been people with gifts of healing in some churches, but he does not say, 'Call for men with the gift of healing.' The Lord is very specific in what He says.

"Call for the elders." The fact that there are more than one shows that it was not merely a question of gift. If you read the New Testament accounts of healings, you will find that they were often performed by one person alone. The plurality is because they represent the church, and not because of any personal gifts. So clearly they are not called in virtue of gift.

Then, they are to anoint with oil. In one place in Mark it says that the Twelve went out anointing with oil (Mark 6:13), but I know equally well that in the rest of Scripture it never mentions oil with the gift of healing. Neither when Peter healed Aeneas, nor when Paul on Malta laid his hands on the governor's father who was sick, does it say there was any oil. But in this case, prominence is given to the oil.

Then a third matter. The hand of the Lord in quickening or healing is associated with a spiritual issue. "If he has committed sins, it shall be forgiven him" (James 5:15). Those healings of Acts were not associated with spiritual issues necessarily. It does not say that the question of sin arose. Some of them were unsaved souls, some were saved when they were healed; in the case of others we are not told. It was an act of God, a work of power, an expression of divine glory, and thank God for such expression, but in this case it is closely associated with the moral and spiritual state of the person involved. It does not say necessarily that the sickness is caused by some offence, but it does say that it is regarded as an occasion for making quite sure, and not just privately with the Lord, but with the elders, that everything is quite right.

This is just another expression of what I have been saying, that the law of the body is the law of life, that these elders are there as representing the fact that this man is claiming his position in the church as the basis of his appeal to the Lord, and the law is one more expression of testimony to the fact that the Holy Spirit is the realm in which he lives. He may have a dying body, but his expression of faith is that the last word shall not be what my body is, but what the Holy Spirit wants my body to be, and what can be most for His glory. And of course, this whole matter of adjustableness, confession of what needs to be confessed, all brings up a whole atmosphere of a man wanting to be sure that he is discerning the Lord's body, that he is right with the Lord.

It says here in James 5:15: "The prayer of faith shall save him that is

sick.” The gifts of healing were something so spontaneous, so miraculous, so instantaneous; it does not say necessarily that this is like that. It may be, as many of us have found it to be, that the Lord takes His own time. We do not mind, the Lord is Lord; we are not going to tell the Lord what to do. He does it in His own way, He gives His own measure of life, but the principle is this, that the law of the body is the law of life, and *that* the Lord will always respond to. How many of us have proved (not necessarily in being sick) how graciously the Lord has quickened us on this basis of fellowship? We have thought we were too tired to come to the prayer meeting, and it was not imaginary, we really were tired out; and we have come and we have come not to ask somebody to pray for us, but we have come into the life of the Lord’s people and prayed for His interests. We have not prayed for ourselves and nobody has prayed for us. We have walked out of the door just as if we have had a week’s holiday by the seaside! That is true. It is life because we are obeying a law, the law of the fact that we have fellowship together. It does not mean to say you must come to the prayer meeting even if you are nearly dead! It is an illustration of a principle. That principle is a precious one to the Holy Spirit, and that is why whenever the principle is kept and however it is kept, in which we subordinate what is personal, what is ours, what concerns us and interests us, to the Lord’s interests among His people, we find the Holy Spirit comes in upon that with new blessing and new life.

Now, what is true of life is true of ministry. In God’s conception, ministry is a matter of the body, and I do not need to read to you those sections of 1 Corinthians which set this forth. People say, ‘Well, of course the body has many members and they are not all the same. So I suppose the Church of England is one member and the Methodists another, and the Baptists another, and we are another; it is quite all right, we are different!’ But the lesson of the body is not that the members are all different; it is that they are interrelated with one another, and I defy any anatomist to interrelate! It cannot be done! It is not just that we are all different. That is true. Our difference is not one that separates us, but that our unity expresses the glory of the Lord, and that is the whole purpose of ministry, says the apostle.

We are greatly helped and delivered from our own personal, individual conceptions (or our sectional conceptions, for they are just as bad as individual ones) by the little prelude that Luke wrote to Theophilus when he was writing the book of the Acts. He says, “The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to

teach, until the day in which He was received up.” The inference is that this is the second volume of what Jesus went on to do and to teach after He was taken up. The gospel told what He began to do and to teach. It is not, ‘The Lord has finished, now it is the disciples’ turn, and the second volume is what Peter and Paul began to do.’ No, it is what *the Lord* went on to do and teach after He was taken up into heaven. That is ministry: the Lord going on with His own work. How can He when He is in heaven? Individually He is in heaven, but He is in heaven as the Head; here on the earth there are members and the members are effective vehicles for the execution of what the Head desires and wills. What you have here is not Peter, Philip or someone else going to do a bit of ministry; it is the risen Lord going on with His work. Here is one, he is part of the body; here is another; and one is busy and the other may be set aside for a time, but what does it matter so long as the Lord is going on with His work? And that is the Holy Spirit’s attitude to ministry all the time: that we are members of one body and that the work that is being done is being done by the Lord, though through us.

Have you ever noticed the fact that some of the apostles are not mentioned in this book? Of course, there are beautiful legends and stories about their world tours, but God does not record them. Does that mean they did nothing? We do not know, but we do know this, that each one was in the place that the Lord appointed for him, and if it meant doing nothing, or if it meant, like James, being beheaded, or like Paul, going to prison, it was alright; they were members of His body. What a load that would lift off so many of us who are in a burden of perplexity and strain about our ministry. It is one of the big problems of the children of God. The Lord is very pleased when He sees us not wanting to be idle; He does not like lazy people; He is pleased that we are exercised. Nevertheless, we must be patient and submissive and full of faith that the Lord, the Head, is quite able to put us where He wants us when He wants us, for we are members of His body. It is His responsibility.

Oh, what a blessing that is! And how practical it is. Take a conference like this. We often feel how much better it would be, how much truer an expression of the Lord if five or six of us were taking part. Well, we think like that, but I want to assure you that when one of us is speaking, it is not his personal ministry; he is the mouthpiece, but it is a corporate ministry. We do not need to get into technical problems of how to express the corporate nature of the church by giving everybody a chance. No, it is not like that. It is a spiritual matter with the Lord as Head, and if the Lord

says, “Speak!” we speak; if He says, “Keep silence for six months and do not speak again”, we say, “Alright”; but it is an active silence, a silence of faith. The ministry is the ministry of all because it is the ministry of the Spirit.

What is the ministry after all but life? To live is to minister; not, to minister is to live. I must explain that. For some people, what they call ‘ministry’ is life; they are interested, they like it. That is life to them — to be busy, to be active, to be prominent. Well, we are all in danger of getting into that peril. You remember what Paul said when he was in prison: “to me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21); not, to me to live is ministry. “To me to live is Christ.” He had been an active man; he was active in spirit, but he was a member of the body, and the Lord had brought another phase into his life. Had his life and comfort been his ministry, he would have been heartbroken, he would have felt on the shelf, he would not have wanted to live any more. He would have said, ‘If I cannot be busy and out preaching, I do not want to live, there is nothing to live for!’ There is everything to live for — live for Christ! Paul said, ‘I live for Christ!’ When we live we minister. The Spirit, in making Christ living in our lives, is carrying on the work of the ministry.

I do not propose to say any more now except once again to draw your attention to what I have said, that this law really governs all the laws; this matter of corporate life is not just one you can choose out of the three laws. This governs them all. The cross can only find its true expression in us as we practise fellowship with the children of God, and that is the very reason why a lot of people do not practise fellowship, because in fellowship the cross is continually brought to us and we to it. In the temple of Ezekiel, everybody who came into the house went to the altar. If they came in the north door, they had to go out the south door; if they came in by the south door, they had to go out of the north door. There was no going in and looking at the altar and going back the way you came. If you came into the house, you had to go past the altar. In spiritual truth, it works out like that. If we are committed to the Lord that His Spirit shall lead us into the true meaning of being members of Christ’s body, we find the cross meeting us, standing in the way, working in us, and the question will arise, ‘Shall we go on or shall we go back, get out?’ Well, you see, the temple of Ezekiel is an ideal temple so there was no going back; they went on. Oh, that the church was like that! It is not pleasant. It is very nice at first: you think how wonderful it is to be coming into such a fellowship, such joy, such love, such blessing, such life. How many have come to the

Lord's people like that, and then after a few weeks they find that they are not given the position or the opportunities they feel they ought to have. They are expected just to be a nobody for Christ's sake. That is the cross to them, and they go off somewhere else where they can be a somebody. You cannot be anybody in the house of God. It is all Christ; the cross sees to that.

And the exalted Lordship of Christ is also applied in the house. That is where the throne was, and still is, mark you. It is still there. There are no officials in the house of the Lord, but the Lord expresses His Lordship in various ways. Among others, we have spoken of the elders. In so many ways we all find that somewhere, somehow, when we come into the sphere of fellowship, we are called to let go, to submit. After all, that great appeal of Philippians 2 to the believers to have the mind of the crucified Lord was concerned with their life together, it was not just away in their own room, praying, reading one of the mystics, singing one of their hymns about being nothing, and the Lord being everything, and the cross just abasing them. It is not just beautiful thoughts, but in practical hard facts of life, living in relationship with others; it is in the house it happens.

As we keep the laws of the house, the Spirit will see to it that we know the blessings of the house. The altar was there, the throne was there in the house, but the river was there too, so great, so full, that even the Dead Sea could not quench it, but was quenched by it. They tell me they are taking the minerals out of the Dead Sea. What a hope! That is how it will become fresh maybe literally, but spiritually the river flows in with life and swallows it up. There is no more death; all is life. "Everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh" (Ezekiel 47:9). The Lord help us to know His river, for His Name's sake.

Concluded