



*the
Golden
Candlestick*

**THE BUILDING OF THE
NEW JERUSALEM**

Part 2

SPIRITUAL CAPACITY

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

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CHAPTER 3 (CONTINUED)

I must ask you to ask the Lord what that means in your own case, how far you are trying to walk after your own reason. If you are a person who wants an explanation to every problem before you will go on, then you are of the Hagar family in bondage, after the flesh, you are of the Jerusalem which is beneath, you are still in the Sinai mountain. You ask, 'Does walking in the Spirit mean that we have no explanations, we are always in a fog, always uncertain?' No, it does not mean that at all. Spiritual interpretation, spiritual explanation is very different from the natural and from the rational. You can come into perfect heart rest about the things of the Lord without Him coming and explaining every problem and every difficulty. Inwardly you can be at rest about it. It may be without explanation; it may be with the assurance that there is an explanation and the Lord will give it in due time; or it may be the rest of the explanation given spiritually, but even then you cannot pass that explanation on to someone else. You know your heart is satisfied, the thing is explained to you inwardly, but if you try to make others understand what you see and what has come to you and the ground of your assurance, you are hopelessly at a loss. Spiritual explanation is a different kind of thing. It does not begin in our reason; it begins much deeper down. We come to see in some other way than with our reason, and that is how it should be.

You say, 'Then what is the function of reason, why has the Lord given us reason? Has He not given us faculties of reasoning for this very purpose? Does walking in the Spirit destroy our reason?' Not at all. If you are not a spiritual person and if the Holy Spirit is not freely at work in you, what I am saying is all twisted and nonsense. It does not help you a bit; it is all fantastic. If you are a spiritual person going through spiritual experiences, what I am saying to you should come as a help. But how is it coming to you? It is coming *through* my reason, but not *out of* my reason. I get it not by reasoning it out, puzzling it out, or by working it out in my mind. I get it in the school of experience. Now my reason comes in to pass that on to you. If you are in that school as an intelligent person, the reason is simply a channel for the Spirit while we are here as human beings on this earth. If we were just disembodied spirits, somehow we would communicate to one another without any reason at all, it would be a kind of spiritual suggestion, an impact of spirit intuition without a word. But we are not disembodied spirits; we are still rational human beings and the

faculty of reason is an instrument between us, but it breaks down unless there is a spiritual revelation behind. What I see, what I have been taught in the school of experience, is of no value unless you are there, but then as I interpret your experience within my own, that is the value of the human reason. It does not begin there, it is not the spring of things, but it is the channel. You see what the Lord is after, to get a spiritual people, a people after the Spirit, not after the flesh, a people of perfected faith. That is the city that He is building and seeking to build into us.

It does represent a very real challenge to us. May the Lord bring us on to that glorious ground of the heavenly Jerusalem where things are in life and in liberty, where we are completely set free.

FREEDOM AND LIFE

“But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother” (Gal. 4:26).

“Howbeit what saith the scripture? Cast out the handmaid and her son: for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman. Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a handmaid, but of the freewoman ... For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage” (Gal. 4:30-31, 5:1).

We saw in our previous meditation that the Holy Spirit, through the apostle, in this chapter and other Scriptures alongside of it, sets forth two ideas as connected with what God is doing. On one side, there is Abraham's family after the flesh; on the other side, his family through the Spirit. That family is changed in its title. At one point it is called by the name of two mountains, Sinai corresponding to the family after the flesh and Zion corresponding to the family after the Spirit; and two cities, the Jerusalem that now is, the earthly Jerusalem, corresponding to the family after the flesh, and the heavenly Jerusalem, corresponding to the family after the Spirit. He sets forth two more ideas: the bondservant, the family after the flesh; the son, (not a servant, but a son), the family after the Spirit. All this is gathered up into Jerusalem that is above, and each of these similes used, the mountain and the city and so on, represent spiritual things which are to be found perfected in that city or in that people, at last.

In this meditation, let us begin by pointing out one other thing that is so much in view in this connection — “Jerusalem which is above is free.” “We are not children of a bondwoman, but of the freewoman.” This city, this people that the Lord is seeking to bring to final fulness, perfection, is marked by freedom.

The bondage of the law

We know, of course, that the apostle here and elsewhere in his writings, deals with the bondage of the law and the liberty of grace. We

shall not particularly speak about the law as such, but what the law represents, that is, the imposing from without of a very complete, comprehensive, detailed and thoroughgoing system of obligations. That is what the law is — it is the putting on of something from the outside and the demanding of an adherence to that imposed system of things of which there is no end. While the law in the first place, was what came through Moses, when those who handled the law had done with it, they had developed it so extensively that a situation arose which was perfectly impossible, so that even those who were Jews — orthodox, faithful, devoted Jews who held Moses in very high esteem, the apostles themselves and no less an apostle than Peter himself, said about this thing that it was something which “neither our fathers nor we were able to bear”. You remember Acts 15. That was the point of the great crisis — whether Christians were to come under the regulations of the Mosaic law, especially circumcision, the concern of the Gentile converts. Peter himself argued against it and said, “Neither we nor our fathers could bear this yoke.” And he appealed that this yoke should not be put upon the Gentiles. By the time this external thing is in the hands of men and they are working it out, they have developed it to such a degree that you cannot turn your head without offending, your very looks are a matter of judgment; almost every action is suspect; there is something to control every gesture. It is like an awful straitjacket and people become terrorized because of this imposed system which was so thoroughgoing and only concerning the external.

The Lord Himself touched that very directly when He spoke about whited sepulchres, inside corruption, dead men’s bones, yet outside beautifully whitewashed, so nice, so clean on the outside; or the platter washed very nicely on the outside, but you must not look inside (Matt. 23:25-28). These men are the interpreters of the law, the custodians of the law, and it is a terrible system of bondage.

This is not only something in history; it is a persistent tendency, and it can become as true of Christianity, as true of the New Testament, as of Judaism and the Old Testament, resulting in bondage.

Inward bondage

This bondage can get inside, not only bondage to the law, but a tied-up-ness inwardly. You meet a lot of dear Christian people, children of God, who are all tied up inside. They are not free, they are not spontaneous, they are not open, they are under some kind of restraint and you

cannot get anywhere with them. Fellowship goes just so far and it will not go any further. There is a tightness, a closeness, a question all the time. Now all that kind of thing is contrary to the spirit of liberty in Christ. The Lord wants us to enjoy the freedom of the heavenly city, to make of us freemen of that city in this deep inward way.

Jerusalem which is above is free. Hagar had to do what she was told because she was the bondmaid. In contrast to that, the mother of us all does nothing by force of obligation and bondage but is free. What a mother — how generous, how gracious, how liberal — all the marks of release. I do not know what you feel about it, but I feel that there is a great need amongst the Lord's children for this inward release from inward strain and bondage. We can be so precise about the letter of the New Testament as to get all tied up. We can become so finicky and particular about the letter, even of the New Testament revelation, that we lose the glory, the liberty. No one will think that I suggest for a moment that we are not to be particular about the Word of the Lord, but there is all the difference between imposing it and laying it down, and coming into it and living in it in the Spirit of life.

The freedom of the New Jerusalem

Jerusalem which is above is free, and, as has been so frequently said, the great blessing which true heavenly citizenship confers upon us now is that we can do as we like. You can go and do as you like, provided the Holy Spirit is in you. That is the argument of Galatians. "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). The Spirit of His Son in our hearts — given that, if the Holy Spirit is Lord in our hearts, we can do exactly what we like. It is for you to find out what you like. We find out that we do not like the things that we thought we should like. We try them out and we discover that we do not like them, we are not happy about them at all. That is a very much better way, a more profitable way, to come into the things of the Lord than to have it laid down to us that we must not do this and that, and be put in a straitjacket.

That is very important, especially for young Christians. You will be asked very often in this world why you do not do this and that, why you do not go to this and that, why you do not go to the cinema, the theatre, why you do not do this and the other thing. What is going to be your answer? Well, my parents would not like it! We do not do that sort of

thing at home! Why do you do the things that you do? Is it because you have been brought up that way, because it is the opinion of those near to you and who have control over you and you must be obedient? Well, as soon as you get free, then you do otherwise.

We have got to have an answer from the inside, and the only answer that is good enough is, Well, that is not my happiness, that is not pleasure to me as it is to you. I do not find my life in that as you do, that does not give me what it gives you! Something has happened in me that has changed my likes and my dislikes, that has joined me to things that I otherwise would not like at all, and has made them my life; something that has separated me from things that naturally I should go after as you do, but now they do not mean anything! That is the only answer. That is, you see, the root of this whole matter. It does not matter how far we advance in the Christian life, it has to be like that. We have to go on and ever on so that the Spirit Himself is setting up His own standards in us in a new way and we are finding more and more that things which were not of any concern to us are now our concern and our delight, and things which we thought a great deal of, even spiritually, are losing their tremendous importance with us because they are being transcended.

May I speak out of my own heart, even as one who has carried spiritual responsibility for a good many years and who has taught the Lord's people over a considerable period? Even in recent years, I have noticed with myself a changing of emphasis. Only a few years ago, I was putting all my emphasis upon certain things, but in those few years I have been, I believe, under the hands of the Lord and my emphasis is changing. It is not that these things are losing their importance. I still hold them as very important, but I am seeing the greater value of other things.

So within something is taking place in order that we are being released all the time from measure, from limitation, in an inward and enlarged way, and that is how it should be. They are new standards for us although they are not new with the Holy Spirit and they are not new with the Lord. It is a gracious release, a very blessed experience, that liberation. We are going from liberty to liberty, and it is from glory to glory, and we thank the Lord. We were very tied up, even in our devotion to the things of the Lord, and perhaps we were making difficulties for others.

Well now, I hope you can understand what I am trying to say to you, that the work of the Spirit of God in us is all the time unto our release from bondage and from limitation into freedom and enlargement.

I wonder if you have ever taken pains to get down to the measure-

ments of the New Jerusalem in the book of the Revelation? If you take the measurements of the New Jerusalem, you will find that there is not a complete patch of ground on this earth which will contain it. Somewhere it will overlap into the sea because it is so great, it is so extensive. If you put it down in Russia, you will get over the sea somewhere. Now that is one aspect of the city, but remember that its extensiveness is only the expression of its vitality. It is not geography or geographical limits. This thing is so vital; it is not big, it is *great*. It is so vital that it can afford to be extensive. With some things, the more you expand them the less effective they are. They are losing as you enlarge; it is superficial area. The real value is lost the more they expand. That is the history of a good many movements which started with something of God in them. The human element has increased and these movements have lost their vitality and it is now a wide superficial area, and the concentrated value of what is of God is not corresponding with the range to which men have brought it.

But this is not so with the city of God. It is so tremendous in its essential, intrinsic value and vitality that it can go beyond all earthly dimensions and lose nothing, and the Lord works on that principle. He does not want to enlarge just to make us big. The principle of enlargement is the outworking of something that He has put inside, and it is simply the expansion of Christ, the vital power of Christ, the life of the Lord Himself. That is what enlarges and that is what releases — the increase of Christ. Well, we must ask the Lord for inward release, for this liberty of sonship, that which is such an important factor in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Deliverance from fear

This release is deliverance from fear. Fear, the Word says, has torment (1 John 4:18). “God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of ... love” (2 Tim. 1:7). The spirit of liberty is the spirit of deliverance from fear and Satan is always trying to bring us into the bondage of fear! “All their lifetime subject to bondage through fear ...” (Heb. 2:15). Satan’s work is fear and fear brings into bondage. God’s work, the work of the Spirit, is liberation and deliverance from fear and thus Satan is destroyed. Do not think for a moment that this does not apply to you, that this is not important to you. The fact is that some of the most saintly of God’s children, after a long life of walking with Him, have been assailed on this very point at the end and have, before passing out, been under a terrible cloud of fear, living in bondage to fear. Satan never gives up

trying to bring this about with the children of God, to bring them back into bondage.

A true picture of Satan's work is drawn for us in the case of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. After their tremendous set-back in the death of the firstborn, after all the judgments that were poured upon them, they still persisted. When they let the people go, it was not long before they pursued them to bring them back again. That is exactly what the enemy is always doing. He never really gives up; he pursues us to bring us back into bondage.

The work of the Spirit is inward and utter release from bondage and from fear. Are you being very careful, so careful that no one can get near you, no one can have real blessed fellowship with you, because you are so careful, so doubtful, so suspicious? Yes, that is how it may be and that is bondage which is destroying the very nature of the work of the Spirit of God. There is no need for any of that if we are really in the hands of the Holy Spirit. It is a free life. You can see clearly that this bondage is set against that full testimony of the Lord and that ultimate thing that He is after — His own glory.

Where we started in these meditations, there we might well finish: letting in the glory. There is something to be done by us to really let in the glory, and we may have to let down a good deal to let in the glory. We may have to get release from ourselves and our own mental activities about divine things to let in the glory. Our very intensity for the Lord, our strenuousness, may keep out the glory. Do not misunderstand that. There are many dear children of God we meet who are so intense. They are almost screwed up with intensity over spiritual things and that intensity makes their faces drawn and their eyes set and they are afraid to smile lest they might be carnal. You say that is an extreme thing, but it is true. It is only a form of this bondage, tied-up-ness.

The Lord wants His children other than that — free, and with the glory there; the glory sometimes breaking through the very countenance; the glory getting through the voice. Oh, do not let us think that, in order to be truly humble and meek, we must have a very melancholy voice. That may not be true of you but it is so with some. These are merely externals. They have nothing to do with the glory of the Lord. The Lord wants people who are showing forth His glory and His glory gets into the tone of voice and into the look and into the touch. And unto that there has got to be a lot of release from mistaken conceptions of what spirituality is, of what utterness for the Lord is; release from mistaken mental interpretation

of the things of the Lord. All that goes when we really do get into living touch with the Lord. You find that life with the Lord is not, after all, such a strenuous thing as some people seem to think it is. That is one of the lessons some of us have been learning for some time and something that the Lord is seeking to do to bring us to a free place with Himself, which is not licence at all. There can be no licence if you are really in the hands of the Holy Spirit, and on the other hand there is no fear, no dread, no inward stiffness and strain and strenuousness. This is not a river dammed up; this is a river flowing, and however we apply the principle of liberty, it just means that it is free.

Now what about the realm of our relationships? Is it free, is it flowing, is it spontaneous? Does it speak a great appreciation of the grace of God, for that is the denial of Sinai which Zion gives. Zion represents the grace of God. It flows. Grace is so often thought of as a river, and so it is, but it is a flowing river. An appreciation of the grace of God means that things flow.

Life the mark of all

It is simple, but very important, to have a people like that flowing in the love of God, flowing in the grace of God, free. This freedom means, (as our last word was to have been), that the mark of all these things on the heavenly side — whether it is the heavenly city, the heavenly mountain, the heavenly family, or the heavenly sonship as coming out from the heavenly side of Abraham's family — is life. You cannot say that Hagar and Ishmael represent life, but you can say that about Isaac. It is life; it is resurrection life; it is the life which has triumphed over death. Zion is life, the heavenly Jerusalem is life, and our contact with one another, if we are children of Zion, is to be a contact with life. We have to see to it that we do not put up barriers, do not allow in ourselves things which contradict or work against life. All these things do work together so completely; they are all of a piece.

We were speaking in a previous meditation about love, the street of gold. Well, what is this love? Paul says that love believes all things (1 Cor. 13:7). It does not mean that love believes a lie and calls black white, but it means that love never imputes anything of a motive until it is proved that that motive is there. It has got to be proved; it does not naturally, instinctively impute something, suspect something, think there is an ulterior motive. That is not love. It does not do that sort of thing.

Love believes all things; it is open, believes the best and imputes nothing. You can see how that would release us from a lot of bondage and tied-up-ness. So much strain comes by asking, 'Well, what have they got up their sleeve? What is going on behind this? What are they after?' We impute something in the background to people's actions, and watch and wait to see that come out and then are ready to say, I told you so! Oh, in this way we get nowhere as children of God. There is no building on that kind of thing. I am concerned for you and myself that the Lord should have a condition of things which makes it possible for Him to build up and to get what He is after.

So love and life and liberty, these things all work hand in glove, they are all of a piece with the great object which the Lord has in view. We must ask the Lord to so work in us that it is the Lord Jesus Himself and what He is after that governs us, His pre-eminence, which is glory in the church unto all ages unto the generations of the generations. See how far this has to go, how long this has to last — unto all ages, unto the generations of the generations, or the ages of the ages; glory in the church! Well, if it is going to last that long and go that far, it has to be something very real, very true, very pure and very incorruptible. Let us ask the Lord to continually work this in us.

(Concluded)

SPIRITUAL CAPACITY

Reading: John 16:12, Heb. 5:11-12, Rev. 21:16.

A vital and indispensable factor in usefulness to the Lord is spiritual capacity. It is a basic principle of service, and we may say that the measure of our real fruitfulness, of the value of our service to the Lord is the measure of our spiritual capacity.

We have the passage in the Revelation, “the city lies foursquare”; the length and the breadth are equal; he measured it twelve thousand furlongs, length, breadth and height. Undoubtedly what is intended there is to impress with the great dimensions of the city. We know that the city is a type of the church, and we know quite well both from the Revelation and other parts of the Word that the city is intended to serve a great purpose. It is something with a vocation — the nations are going to get from the city; the city therefore has something to give. That is its object. Changing the title of the church, it stands in that position in the thought of God, and, in order to serve its divinely appointed purpose and fulfil its heavenly vocation, it must be something with capacity, so that, as we have said, a vital and indispensable factor in usefulness to the Lord is spiritual capacity. For His own glory — and that comes out in the city, “having the glory of God” — that He may be glorified, for His own satisfaction, for His own service, spiritual capacity is indispensable. Everything hangs upon it so far as the Lord’s end in us is concerned.

Now we see that, inasmuch as the city is presented there complete, finished, full, that is the end to which the Lord is working. The object which the Lord has before Him all the time in the saints is spiritual capacity. To that He gives Himself and takes infinite pains. It governs all His ways with His people. Spiritual capacity is the end which God has in view to which He is working, because everything for Him does rest upon it. If that is so, then we have got to give some very careful attention to this matter.

Spiritual capacity

First of all, we must note that it is *spiritual* capacity. This matter of capacity can become a problem unless we approach it in the right way, from the right standpoint. What I mean is this, that there are those who

feel that they have no capacity or that their capacity is very minute; they have what is nowadays called 'an inferiority complex'. They have settled it that they were born small and they will always remain small. They are not much and they never will be very much, and they look at other people who are naturally made on a larger scale than themselves and feel that these are the people who are going to get somewhere. These are the people who are going to count.

It may be that the thing is reviewed in the reverse order. We may take note of people who are naturally limited in capacity and decide that there is not much hope for them, they will not go far, they will not count for very much.

Well now, whatever the sovereignty of God may have to say in these matters, you and I have got to suspend a finality of judgment on that line because we may very likely get some surprises. We find that the people whom we thought were going to be so much and count for so much have, after all, faded out, are not coming up to expectations, and the people we thought did not count very much represent something very much more than we ever imagined they would, and so we must underline the word *spiritual*. It is spiritual capacity, and spiritual capacity may have nothing to do with natural capacity and we have to sift this matter out, analyse it and find out what spiritual capacity is.

There are people who naturally have great powers of mind, powers of control, government and organization. We call them strong-minded people or people with personality, or capable people. When those people come into the realm of spiritual things or divine truth, they very quickly get a hold on the truth and a comprehensive hold and an analytical hold, and it may be that they can speak very much in the realm of that truth. You see the direction of that, and I want to say at once, that is not spiritual capacity. The test will come sooner or later. How much can you and I stand reverses and setbacks, go through trial and suffering and misunderstanding and misrepresentation and all that whole realm of things? How much can we go through sweetly, triumphantly, trustingly? That is the thing which determines our spiritual capacity. Spiritual capacity is a thing by itself, and it is that that the Lord is after. It is that which is of value to the Lord. It is that which is fruitful in service. I am not going to press these differences very much. I want to indicate that it is spiritual value that the Lord has in view, and it may be that natural capacity or capability has nothing whatever to do with this matter, whether it be there or whether it be absent.

Enlargement of spiritual capacity by suffering

Values in God's sight are only spiritual values, and spiritual value does not begin with what we can do and what we know. It begins with what we are, and that is only shown when we are in the fire, whatever that fire may mean where we are concerned. Fire means a different thing to almost every different child of God. What is fire to me, would not be fire to you. That is, what I could go through without perhaps being very much troubled, you could not go through, but what you can go through easily, I could not. It would be a tremendous ordeal to me, it is fire to me, and that is the thing. The fire finds us out, whatever the fire means for each one of us. It is the fiery trial, and remember that the alternative word is "test", the fiery test, the fiery finding out. Well, it is spiritual measure, spiritual capacity, that matters, that the Lord has in view, and what we have just said is not only the way in which it is discovered, but it is the method used by the Lord to produce it. What about the enlargement of spiritual capacity? Oh now you are concerned about this matter! You have perhaps come to your own conclusions about it. Perhaps they have been conclusions on that natural basis of which I have spoken. You are not much and you never can be. Certain people are not much and they never will be much. Certain other people — well, they are going a long way!

Let us come right to the point. Are we going to conclude that in the city, in the church, there are those whose spiritual measure does not matter to the Lord? Have you concluded that? That, so far as you are concerned, He says, 'They are not much, they never will be, I am not interested in them. I am only interested in these people.' We dare not take that attitude. The Lord is concerned for as large a measure in every one of His members as He *can* secure. Let us settle that.

Then, being concerned about spiritual capacity — and I do hope you are exercised about it, and that it does matter to you how much the Lord may have in you — being concerned about spiritual capacity, then you say, How can spiritual capacity be produced and increased? The answer is not one perhaps that we should swiftly accept or invite, but it is quite patient. There is only one way of enlargement, and that is trial, suffering, whatever that may mean. David cried, "In pressure hast thou enlarged me", and there is no other way. Trial, suffering — this alone is the way of spiritual enlargement. You can put the emphasis where you like. It will be most helpful to say it is the way of enlargement. Emphatically it is.

It proved to be so with the disciples to whom He said those words,

“I have many things ... but ye cannot ... now.” They went the way of emptying, the way of losing everything here on this earth, and I do not mean just their temporal things, their homes, families, money, and that sort of thing. They lost their Christ here on this earth, they lost their faith here on this earth. They lost their Kingdom of God here on this earth. They found all in heaven, not after they died, but before they died, but they lost everything as a merely temporal, earthly thing, and they were left, shall we say, stranded, left without a vestige. Those two men walking to Emmaus speak of those who have been shorn and bereft of everything. “We had hoped”. In order words, our hope has been shattered by what has happened. But that was the way of enlargement, and what enlargement! Stripping, emptying. It always is that. It explains the Lord’s dealings with us. He is working, remember, with a positive object in view all the time, never just to empty and humble and break us, but for spiritual measure, enlargement, spiritual capacity. The city is in His eye all the time. Twelve thousand furlongs! Now let us get inside of that.

“The trial of your faith”

Upon what principle does the Lord work to enlargement? What is, after all, the heart of every trial, every bit of suffering? It is only one word, it is faith. “The trial of your faith”. Every trial that God allows, every bit of fiery testing which is by His permission, has that object in view. Don’t forget it! It always is a question of faith. God hangs everything in this dispensation upon one word, and that is faith. We could get out to very great dimensions of divine truth. The church is the chief feature of God’s interest in this whole dispensation from the day that the Lord Jesus was received up into glory until He comes again. But what is the church for? The church’s vocation is to be that vessel in which it is manifest that God has undone all the work that Satan did. That is tremendous! In Christ, and Christ in the church, the inclusive, comprehensive meaning is that all Satan ever brought into this universe has got to be put out of this universe through the church, and the point upon which Satan scored at the beginning and brought it all in and has operated all the way through, has been unbelief, that unbelief which is right there rooted in the very being of every child of Adam, and in the church God is going to destroy that unbelief in a Man, a One New Man, and eventually have a corporate Man which has destroyed Satan in the power of the blood of the Lamb along the line of unbelief. God must do it. He has done it in His

Son, but He has brought a Body into relationship with Him as Head, and He who said in Gen. 3:15: “He shall bruise thy head”, has also said in Romans, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly”, bringing the Head and the members together in one crushing of the serpent. He is doing that, but the principle upon which Satan always works is that of unbelief.

Unbelief works in a thousand different ways — inability to trust God — but there it is, one thing all the time.

Now the fiery trial is concerning faith, and faith is the measure of capacity and therefore faith is the measure of service to God. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” In the end: “They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony.” That is not some phraseology that they used. It is a position they occupied.

I am not going to follow that further, but if that is true, if every trial which brings up in a new way the whole issue of faith is intended by God to be that which goes before new usefulness to the Lord, fresh value to the Lord — and there is service in view, usefulness to the Lord in view, real spiritual value to the Lord in view. Yes, there is service ahead, that is the point — and God introduces every bit of enlarged usefulness with an enlargement of spiritual capacity. He keeps these things together. If we did but recognize the law of service! It is this. Service is not according to what we have mentally apprehended of doctrine. Service is governed by the Lord entirely according to what we know of Him and of our spiritual capacity. In view of the tremendous work and activity going on for the Lord, that is perhaps a serious, almost questionable, thing to say, but nevertheless it is true. Real service stands in spiritual measure.

The indwelling Holy Spirit the basis of every possibility

The hope that makes all this possible is the fact of the indwelling Holy Spirit. You see, in John 16:12, the complete statement is, “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come ...”. When the Spirit is come, a great deal more will be possible, and the fact that the Spirit has come and that the Spirit dwells in us, provides a basis of every possibility. He is there with all the fulness, He is there to make everything clear, to lead us into the fulness of Christ. The Holy Spirit can only have His way as we are out of it because we are the trouble. We are the limiting factor. We get in the

Lord's way in multitudes of ways, and all this fiery trial is really getting us out of the way and making way for the Lord, enlarging room for Him.

The need for exercise

Just come back to that with which we started. In that passage in Hebrews, the writer pointed out that this lack of ability to receive what was available was because there had been little or no exercise, and so he links exercise with capacity. Babies who have not exercised their senses can only take milk, he says. Full-grown men who exercise their faculties can take meat.

Well now, here is a question of exercise. You notice that the Lord has no royal road to fulness. It is always along the line of exercise. When certain people came to Joshua and said that the bit of the inheritance given them was hardly good enough for such great people as they were, Joshua did not say, You are wonderful people — you must have more. He said, There is a difficult bit of hill country up there. Prove you are great people! Take it, reduce it, cultivate it, turn it to account! Exercise! Exercise is God's law of enlargement always.

So I ask you, what about exercise over spiritual capacity? Are you using what you have got to the full? Are you exercised over God's word as it is given? Do you go to Him about it? Do you take it as an address, something more you have heard, or do you get down to business before the Lord and really hold on to it? And over this whole matter of spiritual capacity — it is something about which to be exercised really before the Lord.

Let us ask the Lord to find in us those who respond to make it possible for Him to bring out all that is in His heart, that there shall be no stay of that which is not just truth and revelation, but vital to the church. And, praying for yourself and yourselves, for one another, will you pray the Lord that He will prepare a people to receive that which is vital to the church's coming to God's end, to hold that position of responsibility in the ages to come.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

“And behold, one of them that were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his ear. Then says Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matt. 26:51-52).

“And He said ... , But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that has none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword” (Luke 22:36).

There seems to be a contradiction in those two passages — “Put up ... thy sword ... for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword”; “... he that has none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword”.

Whatever other explanations there may be given to this seeming contradiction, I am going to ignore them and come down upon one particular point. I would have you note the necessary adjustment in the order of these two passages. They ought to be in the reverse order. The forbidding to take the sword came after the command to buy one. That word about taking the sword came at an earlier date, for, as you see, the words forbidding the sword came in the garden of Gethsemane right at the end of our Lord’s life.

Our warfare spiritual not physical

It is clear to us that the whole of the subsequent teaching of the New Testament about warfare is spiritual and not physical. You call to mind at once passages that bear that out. “The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God” (2 Cor. 10:4). “Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood” (Eph. 6:12). Wrestling is a very good word, by the way. It looks like a change of metaphor from wrestling to fighting. It means to sway. It is taken from the wrestler, to and fro. Our swaying to and fro is not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers. The teaching of the New Testament after this is that warfare is spiritual and not physical. And there is this fact, that we nowhere find the apostles, these to whom these words were addressed or any others added to them, with swords when they went out on their mission. There is no reference whatever to their carrying swords literally in their ministry or in their

work or in their going forth into the world. So we are brought back by these passages, not to a contradiction but to this. On the one hand “Put up thy sword”, because our warfare is not with flesh and blood. If you have the idea of anything in that realm, you are wrong. Put away the idea, as you are commanded to put away the sword which indicates that you have got that idea. On the other hand, sell your cloak and buy a sword.

So we are brought back by this seeming contradiction very forcibly to the fact of spiritual warfare, that there is warfare, and that it is spiritual, and although this is no new information to most of you, it is necessary from time to time for us to have things brought to remembrance which we already know. This not a subject I delight in, and I asked the Lord if He would excuse me in this matter. I do not like it, but I am compelled.

The reality of spiritual warfare

In the first place, it is an emphasis, or a re-emphasis, upon not just the fact of spiritual warfare — you know that — but on the reality of this. We may know all that there is to know as to the Bible teaching on this matter, and we may be full of information about spiritual warfare, but the fact remains that you and I at times, because of certain things, forget that is exactly what is happening at this moment. We put it down to other things. We begin to look at people, we begin to look at circumstances, we begin to look at our own misfortunes and disappointments, we begin to attribute it to physical conditions and all the secondary causes are made primary, when not always, but so often the fact is that we are right on this thing now — a mighty spiritual conflict is going on and we are in it. If I were to try and safeguard every sentence that I uttered, I should be here for ever. There are times when the strain is due to wrong relationships and our fault or faults. It is no use blaming the devil for that for which we are responsible, but there are times when we cannot make any secondary cause a primary cause, or we cannot say it is because of this or that. There is something that you cannot get at, something behind, something remote, something that you cannot lay your hand on. It may be coming through this or that means, but it is something extra to the people or the things. And I do bring this re-emphasis to you that you will seek to bear this in mind, that it is not always and not generally because of situations, conditions, people, upon which and upon whom you can lay your hand, but there is something else going on. There is a warfare in heaven.

Warfare with the prince of the power of the air

When we, in the New Testament language, speak of heaven, do not let us think of something far away, remote, up there somewhere in or beyond the clouds. The New Testament makes it perfectly clear that what is meant by heavenly warfare is the very atmosphere all around us, “the prince of the powers of the air” (Eph. 2:2). Now all the air is not above the clouds. We are breathing it now, the heavenlies are wrapping us around all the time, and this spiritual conflict is in the very atmosphere. If you need any illustrations of that, you have only to turn to the Old Testament. “Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see” (2 Kings 6:17), and when his eyes were opened, the very near things were seen to be encompassed about by former and otherwise unseen forces. It is heavenly, but for us the better word is atmospheric. We know a little about atmospheric in spiritual conflict, but even then it is not always outward and objective because it is spiritual.

And because we have a spirit which is the medium of connection with what is spiritual, this thing cannot always be said to be outside of us. It seems to be right inside sometimes. It seems to be inward. You must not just divide up outward and inward in that way because flesh and blood are not barriers to spiritual conflict at all. Our bodies are not a bulwark against spiritual influences. They register them but they do not resist them. It is very often inward, and so we feel this atmospheric thing right inside of us. It becomes very real — that is the point, the reality of this spiritual conflict, this spiritual warfare.

The occasion of the conflict

In passing on, let me remind you of the occasion for it, and the occasion is the destiny of the church. All departments and realms of truly spiritual work come into touch with these spiritual forces in opposition, and this stands to be borne out and can be verified. The nearer you get to the great eternal conception of God as to the destiny of the church, the Body of Christ, the nearer you get to the antagonism of the enemy, the more pronounced it will become. You will meet spiritual antagonism in seeking to win souls for Christ because that is the beginning of this thing, but when the full thought of God in a corporate body is brought into view, the church, then the full challenge to the forces of evil is registered because it is in the church and the church’s destiny that the whole conflict

of Satan is to be met and overthrown, hence, of course, the tremendous significance of corporate life. On the one hand, the enemy hates corporate life and will do anything to break it up and he will do it always by the simplest means possible if they will succeed; he just interferes with the corporate life of the Lord's people by simple means. For example, if you are a mood person you very soon fall out of the corporate life — I just do not feel like it! That is all the enemy needs very often with some people to put them out, and he has struck a blow at the very destiny of the church by the moods and temperaments of Christians. And if on simpler lines he cannot succeed, he will press to the more complex or highly developed forms just to destroy the relatedness and fellowship of the people of God, and therefore fellowship and relatedness become a battleground. We think fellowship is a kind of picnic, a religious festival, having a good time. Praise God for all the joy and blessedness of fellowship, but it goes far beyond that, and it is more a matter of real battle, warfare. A field of desperate conflict is the maintaining and preserving of true inward heart fellowship with all sorts of Christians, not just the sort that we like.

We have to think this matter out sometimes when it comes to difficulty with regard to some, and we seriously get before the Lord and say, How can I find a ground of going on with So-and-so? I have to eliminate this, ignore that, refuse to come on to certain ground with them and keep on other ground, but at all costs I must go on. The battleground of fellowship is very real and fellowship is truly a great factor in this spiritual conflict. Do remember it. Fight for it, stand for it and withstand for it, and, having done all, stand for it.

Warfare in the realm of corporate prayer

And of course as a part of that is the great corporate function of prayer. We know that this matter of spiritual warfare is carried into the realm of prayer. "With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18). Corporate prayer. We perhaps just need to be reminded again from time to time, may be at this time, that our times of coming together for prayer are not just to ask the Lord for a lot of things. Let me be clear here. There are times for coming to ask the Lord for things, but what things? You look at the book of Daniel, and you find that Daniel was stretched out for three whole weeks fasting and praying, giving himself to prayer. What was he asking for? He was asking for

things, yes, but what things? He was asking for the fulfillment of the great purposes of God. He knew what they were. He knew the great purposes of God in relation to God's people. He had acquainted himself with God's purposes. He says to begin with that he understood by the books (Dan. 9:2), he knew the details God had given to other servants of His — and more than that, that he was a part of those purposes; it was in his own heart. He knew inwardly what the purposes of God were concerning God's elect people, and it was because those purposes of God were at the time in a state of suspended animation, because there was a contradiction to God's intention, because the people of God were not coming into or standing in in those purposes and the realization of them, and because the enemies of the Lord had been given an advantage over the Lord's people because of their unfaithfulness. It was that that drew out Daniel in that prayer. And then we know there was a great warfare in heaven. I think we have some tremendous revelations. During the twenty-one days of his praying, a terrific scene had been going on without his knowledge. The very principalities and powers had been so stirred and moved because of this kind of praying that they had withstood the messengers of God. A fight had been going on and one archangel needed to come to the support of another, a greater. Supreme archangels had been drawn into this, showing that archangels are not almighty for one was not enough, there was no way for them to get through. It is not the asking for things, it is the things that we ask for that touch heaven.

When we come together for prayer, we ought to be right in line in full view of God's great revealed purposes concerning His people, and making this the burden of our hearts, not, forgive me, I do not underrate the importance of praying for all sorts of things and there are times when those things may come in, but they must not occupy the ground in the place of the major things, the great purposes of God. What God needs is a people who have seen His intentions and purpose, the destiny of His Son and of the church which is His Body, and are really giving themselves to pray this issue through. It will be warfare. Sometimes there is a blanket over the atmosphere; then you give it up. No, that is the occasion. Oh, for discerning hearts to say, There is something happening tonight, something against things tonight, we are not going to take this on; in the Name of the Lord we set up our banners. The Lord does need that. You have heard that said here many times. We do need to serve the Lord in this capacity, but He must have an instrument for it, and that kind of prayer is the warfare prayer that sets the conflict going and makes us know the conflict and sells

us out in the conflict. So the occasion of the conflict is the destiny of Christ and His Body, and it touches this matter of corporate life and corporate prayer.

The ground of triumph

Now just a word about the ground of triumph. We have an assured ground of triumph, but we must take that ground. I am not going into all the details of Eph. 6:10 and onwards. I think the metaphor there has led us astray. “Wherefore take up the whole armour of God ... having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness ... and take the helmet of salvation” (v. 13-17), and so on, a very earthly picture, and people begin to operate in a mental realm of material things, and what do we do in the prayer gathering? Say, we take the helmet of salvation, we take the whole armour of God? You are wrong. It is the past tense: “Wherefore *having taken*”. You have got to come in armour. The battle has already started! We have to live on this ground.

a) Reality

And what is the ground? Dismiss the metaphor, get right down to the spiritual reality. Loins girded with truth. The ground in the first place is truth. That is, we must be on the ground of reality. There must not be anything false about our position, anything artificial or unreal — and that may be in mere mental knowledge of truth which is not heart knowledge. It must not be something we have been brought up in, or taught, but this spiritual warfare, this spiritual conflict is very real indeed. We must be girded, we must be strong by being on the ground of down-right reality.

b) Righteousness

The breastplate of righteousness, the ground of righteousness. And what is it? We know here by much teaching that righteousness is that which is of satisfaction to God. The whole question of righteousness is God’s rights, what He has a right to, and what God has a right to is that which accords with His own nature, and God is right, righteous. He is equal, He is true. So God has to have that which satisfies Him. Justification by faith is another way of speaking of righteousness by faith, imputed righteousness. God is satisfied because of something or someone, and that is our ground. You see, the wiles of the devil are always against that, to get you off the

ground where you stand in the absolute satisfaction of God by faith. The enemy is saying, God is dissatisfied, God has all sorts of things against you. What is our ground for meeting the enemy? God's satisfaction, God's rights, secured unto Him in Jesus Christ. Righteousness covering the most vital part — the breastplate of righteousness, the ground of that righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ.

c) The gospel of peace

“Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace”. Forget the picture of the feet and the shoes. What is the thing? — peace, and it is the gospel of peace, the good news of peace. Anybody with real divine good news is a menace to the kingdom of Satan. What is the enemy always trying to do? He is trying to make us look and feel as though we had bad news or were going to have bad news. The good-news heart — it is only another way of speaking of joy. “Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel” — bringing news of peace. How the enemy hates it when we go to the world with good news! He does not mind you going with bad news, or a face that looks like it. Go with good news in spirit and manner. Paul, and Silas went to Philippi with good news, the gospel of peace, and you know very soon the enemy rose up to try and take that off their faces and out of their voices! (Acts 16:11-34). He did not succeed. Triumph over the enemy was because the good news spirit was in their hearts. It is a tremendous strength against the enemy to stand in the good of your feet shod, standing in the good of the good news, the good news of peace. He “made peace through the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20). There is now no need for estrangement or enmity or anything like that. God is not against you. You are countering something there. God is for you. In Christ He has shown He is for you. It is good news.

d) Faith

“The shield of faith”. We all know how needful for spiritual triumph the spirit of faith is.

e) The strength of salvation

And “the helmet of salvation” — what is that? Well again, it is salvation, it is assurance that all is well. It covers a lot of ground. It is on the head where all these arguments, debates, fears and uncertainties take place. It is the mighty strength of this salvation which is of the Lord. You have got to stand on this ground.

f) The Word of God

Finally, “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”. That will mean that we know the word of God and know how to use the word of God at the right time. You see how the Lord met the enemy in the wilderness with an apt quotation of the word of God in which He had soaked Himself. It came not only as a quotation of Scripture but just the right thing for the right moment. Therefore, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16). Do not let anyone think that they are going to triumph in the spiritual warfare if they neglect their Bibles any more than prayer. Neglect prayer and the Word and you will be worsted, just as you will if you neglect fellowship. These things are essential: the Word, prayer, fellowship; all that on this ground of truth, righteousness, peace and salvation.

Well, the Lord use this if for no further enlightenment, for fresh provocation to stand and withstand, remembering, while we know we are in a warfare, not to let the enemy, as he so often does, make us as though we did not know, as though it did not matter. We must be active in our knowledge of these things.