

"By My Spirit"
by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter 1 – The Divine Testimony

Chapter 2– The Divine Testimony (cont.)

Chapter 3 – The Divine Testimony (cont.)

Chapter 4 – The Vessel of the Divine Testimony

Chapter 5 – The Vessel of the Divine Testimony (cont.)

Chapter 6 – The People of the Testimony

Chapter 7 – The Two Features and Functions of the Vessel of Testimony

Chapter 8 – The Adversary of the Testimony

Chapter 9 – The New Man (a Parenthesis)

"By My Spirit"
by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter 1 – The Divine Testimony

Reading: Hag. 1:1; 2:1-5, 20-23; Zech.1:1; 3:1-6; 4:1-14; Rev. 11:3-4, 7; 12:11.

Thus we see the reappearance in the book of the Revelation of things which are mentioned in the prophecies of Zechariah. There are more than we have read. For instance, in Zech. 2:1-2, we have the man with the measuring line in his hand going to measure Jerusalem *"to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof"*; and in Rev. 11 we have something very much like it — *"There was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein."* Different prospects, of course, are connected with this measuring. In Zechariah the prospect is a bright one; in the Revelation it is very much otherwise.

Then we have two witnesses; in Zechariah Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the two witnesses of Rev. 11; and in connection with them two olive trees said to be two anointed ones; and in Rev.11 two witnesses, two olive trees, anointed ones. In Zechariah we have Satan, the adversary as the Accuser; in Rev. 12 — *"the accuser of our brethren is cast down."* In Zechariah we have the seven spirits, the seven eyes of the Lord, and you know in the Revelation that occurs several times — chapters 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6 — *"the seven Spirits of God"*; the seven eyes of the Lord. And there are other similarities, as we shall see. But I am not saying that both sets relate to the same thing or to the same time and the same immediate purpose. What I am pointing out is that there are these similarities, identical terms used in both cases.

Well, there are many mysterious things in these Scriptures. We make no claim whatever to understand them all, but there is no doubt that a definite and clear message arises out of them for the Lord's people and I am sure that understanding can be had if, under the anointing of the Spirit, we are able to resolve all the parts into some broad issues. Those broad issues come out quite distinctly as we stand back and look at all these things and seek to see what they do represent or imply. I think I can summarize for you those broad issues. They seem to me to be six.

1. A divine testimony represented by the lampstand or the candlestick.
2. The vessel of that testimony — the temple or the house, or, in the New Testament, the church and the churches.
3. The people of the house and the testimony; in the Old Testament that company which came back from exile. Of the millions who went into exile, only some forty-two thousand made the sacrifice required to come back. They became the people of the house, the people of the testimony.
4. The two features and functions of the vessel of testimony, the double anointing, Joshua and Zerubbabel representing priesthood and government.
5. The adversary of the house and the testimony. He is always there. We see him in Zechariah in the place of power and we have to discover what it is that gives him the place of power. Then we see him in defeat, overthrown, and again we have to understand how the adversary is overthrown, on what ground.
6. The basis and means of the triumph of the testimony. *"This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might"* — the word there I think really relates to military

power and could be rightly translated 'not by an army' — "*nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.*"

So we have all these mysterious things which in themselves are very difficult to understand, resolved into these six major issues.

Now all those things apply both to Zechariah, with Haggai, and the Revelation, without our trying to say that the two witnesses of Rev. 11 are Joshua and Zerubbabel come to life again. We do not need to strain the interpretation and application if we see what the spiritual principles and implications are, what really lies behind this. Out of it all there arises a very strong message for the people of God at all times, especially in this dispensation, and more especially at the close of the dispensation, and you need not be shut up to any one of the schools of prophetic interpretation.

I am not going to worry you very much about those schools. You know there are different schools of prophetic interpretation. There are those who believe that it has all been fulfilled in history past. There are those who believe that it is being fulfilled through the dispensation, and there are those who believe that it has all yet to be fulfilled, and there are two other schools mixed in with them — those who interpret literally and those who interpret spiritually. It is not necessary to be bound up finally and exclusively with any one school; they are all right, and they are only wrong when they limit it to their particular interpretation.

This message is an abiding message for the Lord's people but of special emphasis at an end time. Haggai and Zechariah represent an end time in the old dispensation and the same spiritual principles and features arise in the end time of this dispensation in the book of the Revelation. So we find ourselves with these things in the presence of a message which is peculiarly for our own time as we believe it to be the end time of the dispensation.

The Divine Testimony - the Glory of God

Having said that as a general survey and summary, we can begin to get down to the different phases of it and spend a little time now with the first of these things which arise from these Scriptures — the divine testimony, symbolized in Zechariah in the candlestick all of gold. Many of you are familiar with that. I do not want to go over the ground which exists already in a little booklet on "*The Candlestick All of Gold*", which is a survey of the fourth chapter of Zechariah, but I do want to come to this in some still deeper and fuller way than is there.

What is this divine testimony which, while it is the thing through all dispensations which governs and dominates and is supreme, becomes of such particular importance and significance at an end time, which God brings into view in such an emphatic way at end times? What is the divine testimony? I wonder what your answer is to that in your own minds? The answer which I have to give, which I am persuaded is right, but am still open to further revelation and enlightenment from the Lord, is that the divine testimony is the glory of God. The candlestick all of *gold*; the glory of God. If you think for a moment, you will see that that is so along the two great lines of history, the spiritual history of man; firstly along the line of everything that is from God's side, for everything from God's side issues in God's glory. Why, immediately your familiarity with the Word of God will make that clear. Whenever God does something, the issue of it is His glory and that is why He does it, that is His concern. We will come back to that in a moment.

There is the other line of spiritual history; everything that comes from Satan seeks to hide that glory, seeks to mar that glory, seeks to rob God of that glory. You can always tell by the effect what the object is, and if the glory of God issues from what God does then you conclude that that is the object of God's doing it. And if the glory of God is

veiled, covered, darkened, marred, spoiled, by Satan's activity, then you know what his object is.

The Glory of God Behind Every Divine Movement

The glory of God lies behind every divine movement. Begin with humanity in general, at large, and it is made quite clear that man was created for the glory of God. The intention lying behind the creation of man, the bringing of that species of beings into God's universe was that God thereby, therein, there-through, should be glorified. That was the intention of God in humanity as a whole. In the Mount of Transfiguration you see in an inclusive way God's intention realized as to humanity, a representative Man glorified with the glory of God and now in the glory as the Man inclusive of that humanity which will be glorified, revealing the glory of God.

But humanity failed in that purpose in the first instance and then you have a line of antediluvian saints and patriarchs: Abel, Enoch, Noah; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph — and in them God is at work for His own glory. The testimony of God is bound up with every one of them.

To understand Abel and his coming on to the scene in this great drama of the ages, you must recognize that what is bound up with Abel and Abel's sacrifice is the glory of God. Over against that, Cain stands to take the glory to fallen man; he is cast out, but Abel lives, is immortalized.

So with everyone till you come to Abraham. "*The God of glory appeared unto ... Abraham*" (Acts 7:2). Why that designation of God in that connection? It indicates what the end is that God has in view, taking up this man that by him the glory of the God of glory should be recovered and shown forth; and we have to study Abraham's life at every point with that in view. We have thought of him as representing certain particular spiritual things and quite rightly so, but the sum of it all is the glory of God. We do not understand Abraham until we see what his life at every point and as a whole is related to, and when we get to the end of that life we have to say, Here is a triumph for the divine testimony, here is something which goes down to the glory of God for ever! Trace the man's steps and see. If you and I knew something more of the triumph of faith which was wrought in Abraham, more of hoping against hope, believing when things were impossible, overcoming absolute impossibilities by faith and turning them into realities, would that not be to the glory of God? Yes, that is the testimony.

Isaac is that — the glory of God. And Jacob, one of the most despicable characters in Holy Writ, and God does not cover it up, but lets it be fully known for this very purpose that He might say the most wonderful thing that ever was said — "*I am the God of Jacob.*" That is to the glory of God if He can do something with Jacob; He can do something with you and me if He can do something with Jacob. That is the glory of God.

The design of humanity, in which humanity failed as a whole, was the glory of God; it was the design in these Old Testament saints, but they never reached the full glory of God. The design was passed on to Israel and taken up in a corporate way, and that is why Israel was raised up, and if we fail to see the glory of God in the case of Israel, then we are blind indeed. This is a terrible story, this story of Israel. The forty years in the wilderness alone, provoking God Himself almost beyond measure, but what about afterwards and ever since? Israel's story is a terrible story, but the glory of God is bound up, not with a people concerning whom it could be said that they were the most choice, the most delightful, the most lovable, the most devoted, the most faithful among the nations of the earth. No, the Lord said He had not chosen them because they were better than other people. It sometimes seems that He had chosen the most difficult of the peoples of the earth. Ah, but therein lies His glory, and in the days of their faithfulness to the Lord, oh, how the glory of God was manifested to the nations of the world, and that

is why they were raised up, but they failed finally, and the testimony was passed on and taken up in the church, taken from Israel and "*given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*" (Matt. 21:43) as the Word puts it.

So this vessel of the testimony, the church, was brought in and at its beginnings the glory of God filled the house. It was brought in for that. God was greatly glorified in the church for some considerable time. The object of the church is that — to be the vessel of the testimony for the glory of God, and the church has failed. The book of the Revelation opens with the failure of the church generally and the testimony is passed on to the overcomer, the last phase of the testimony, the overcomer and final triumph (Rev. 12); the glory of God.

I am quite sure that it will help us a great deal if we recognize and keep in view all the time what it is the Lord is after in our own individual case, and in the case of His people. He is not after this or that or some other *thing* with us or with His church, His people. Let us be very careful what we mean or imply by the phrase — the testimony. That can become merely an interpretation of truth, a system of doctrine, some particular form of creed; though it might not be called a creed, it is that. It means this and that and something else, and that is the testimony. These things may be in the testimony, but the testimony is something deeper than that, something greater than that. The testimony of God is the glory of God, and we are here for that, and it is all gathered up, from humanity as in the original intention of God, through Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and all the rest, and the church and the overcomer. It is all gathered up into His Son, and Christ becomes the sum of the testimony of God. He came to vindicate God, to establish the glory of God and to meet and deal with everything that marred that glory. He was able to say, "*I have glorified thee on the earth*" (John 17:4), and to His disciples He said, "*Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit*" (John 15:8), assuming that that is the end of everything, that is the object in view — My Father glorified.

The matter with which we are concerned and which concerns us more than anything else is that God is glorified in us and by us, and all God's dealings with us are to have that as the issue — His glory. That will be the issue if we will believe it. Yes, very dark and terrible times, and experiences which seem to have no prospect or promise of glory will come. It looks like despair and shame, defeat and calamity, but that is how things do look again and again in the history of God's ways with His people, but that is not the end. "*I would have you know that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel*" (Phil. 1:12). Philippi looks like a disaster, calamity; it is an inner dungeon, men beaten, broken in body, but the issue is the glory of God. The church again and again has been plunged into seas of blood and it looked as though Satan was triumphing. But what is the issue in the long-run? — the glory of God every time, and Satan overthrown, defeated. In Christ God has secured His end and His end is sure, and if we abide in Christ, the issue of all the dark days and the dark ways is going to be glory.

We are bound up with the divine testimony. This is a glorious fact with a glorious issue but it is a challenge. It demands an abandonment to that divine end, an abandonment to the glory of God. That is the thing which governed Abel's life and Enoch's life and the life of those men of old. It is the thing which governed the lives of the apostles and the saints at the beginning, and many since. What is really the governing thing in our lives? Is it the testimony of God, the divine testimony, the glory of God? Oh, I know every one of you would say yes to that! We would all say quite strongly and swiftly, Oh yes, my one desire is for the glory of God, I want my life to be for the glory of God, I want God to be glorified in my whole life! Yes, that may be true and our hearts may be perfectly honest and sincere as we say that, but it is possible for even such hearts to stand back on that issue a score of times every day because this question of the glory of God touches so many practical matters.

The Glory of God to Govern in the Matter of Relationships

It touches that matter of relationships. Where there is a strain, a not getting on together, where there is a drawing apart, how is that going to be dealt with? Only by this one thing absolutely mastering our hearts — the glory of God. We have to look that thing squarely in the face and say, 'Does this glorify God? That is the only thing that matters!' If not, then so far as in me lies, this is going to be altered, whatever it costs! That is where the pinch comes. Sometimes our own pride, feelings, interests, something dear to us, just gets in the way of the glory of God. For God to be glorified, we have to get off our stilts, down off our high horse, down from our pride, get very low and let go to God, yield to God for His glory. The question of the glory of God just touches everything and anything in our lives, and what a false position it is, how inconsistent for any of us to say that we are here for the Lord's testimony, and for that simply to be a matter of divine truth and doctrine, some fundamental truths of the gospel, when the testimony of the Lord is the glory of God. If we are going to be for, and if we are going to uphold the testimony, we have got, at every point, in every matter, to deal with things in the light of how they touch the glory of God and how far the enemy has a part in them to mar that glory; he is always there. So the great motive against the enemy and for the Lord is the Lord's glory.

That has been the strength and dynamic of much suffering. Many have been able to go through much suffering and not even have deliverance because they have felt that God could be glorified most along that line and they have found grace in suffering. God ministers grace to those who have His glory at heart. "*Them that honour Me I will honour*" (1 Sam. 2:30).

So the thing that is in view is a candlestick all of gold, a testimony which is all the glory of God. I say again, that comes up in a peculiar way at the end of the dispensation because the enemy is so much more intensely active to get the glory. Oh, you see today in this world how it seems almost impossible for God to so help men that they do not take the glory to themselves. A little bit of success, a little bit of prosperity, a little bit of victory — *our* feat of arms, *our* wonderful men, *our* wonderful generals, *our* great traditions. It is the old stuff of which we are made coming up again. It seems impossible for the Lord to do anything for people today without the glory being taken by the people, by men. There is a greater bid than ever at this time for the glory of this world, the kingdoms of this world, as over against God than there ever was in history. Standing over against that, God must have some who hold the glory for Him against it all, a vessel of His testimony. It is a very costly thing.

Now that is as far as we will go for the time being. The Lord write that word in our hearts!

Chapter 2 – The Divine Testimony

Reading: Zech. 4; Rom. 8:9,14,16; Gal. 4:6.

"These are the two sons of oil."

"... if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God."

That little clause at the end of Zechariah 4 - "*sons of oil*". There is no need for us to stay with the detail, but what is important at the moment is that we should realize that there is a message here which is a message of very great importance to us at this very moment.

The visions of Zechariah, this one among them, can, of course, be regarded as Old Testament types and figures and mysteries, and therefore a subject for interesting study if you are so disposed. It can stand there vaguely in the background as just something in the Bible. The question which must press right to the fore with us this now is this — Is this something which really stands related to our own lives in the thought of God now? Unless it is, then let us put it away; life is too short and too full of problems and considerations for us to be occupied with things that really do not count in any real way. We do not want to be even occupied with the Bible as a book, however great a book it may be. The thing that really does concern us is whether God is saying anything to us now as to His mind. If so, let us listen with all the ears that we have inside and outside to know what it is that He has to say. And there is no doubt whatever — if only we will pause, stop, be quiet, and let Him speak — that there is a message from God in this chapter. It is not something of the past; it is something which goes on through this age and comes up again and again.

When you get to the eleventh chapter of the book of the Revelation, which chapter takes us very far on towards the end of the age, you find these very symbols used again: two olive trees, two witnesses. And they are standing there in Revelation to do tremendous things in relation to the Lord. This is something which governs, altogether apart from past, present and future. It is a spiritual thing which stands back of all things that are seen, and that is the thing that we have got to get hold of right away before we go any further with interpretation. The Word of God states it positively and precisely, that the things which are seen are the result of things which are not seen. There is something going on behind all that is seen which is producing the seen, and all that we are seeing, what we call history, is simply the outcome and outworking of what is going on in the unseen. A tremendous thing is going on behind the scenes; God is working things out there. Satan is fighting terrifically in the unseen to withstand the purposes of God, and what is taking place here is simply the repercussion of that unseen activity.

So you come to this chapter, and it is quite clear when you think of it that that is where the chapter is. Here is an illustration given; it is only an illustration. It is just what we would do. We would say, Now, it is like this, and we would take an illustration, but the illustration only points to something other, something set forth in a figure, in a parable, in a type, and we say, Now, let this represent so-and-so. And that is what God is saying here: This that you see as in a vision is something which represents something else. Then you read the details, and you see that it does represent something else and it is not just an interesting figure.

Here then, is the candlestick with its seven branches, the bowl on the top of it, seven pipes connecting with each of the seven lamps; on either side of the bowl two olive trees with two golden pipes emptying golden oil out of themselves, presumably, though not stated, into the bowl. And that is God's illustration of something that is in His mind and something that He is doing out of sight.

The Son of Oil

What is the candlestick? The answer precisely is that the candlestick is Christ. Christ is illustrated by a candlestick all of gold. What is a candlestick for? What is the effect and value of this candlestick? Well, it is light and life. You can see how all of a piece this is with Scripture. You come to the writings by John and you are right in the presence of this very thing. He begins his Gospel with Christ. "*The Word was with God*"; "*the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*" - *tabernacled* among us, made His tabernacle among us. You go back to the tabernacle and right in the centre of the tabernacle is the lampstand or the candlestick with its seven branches. "*He tabernacled among us*" — and then what? — "*the light and life of men*".

You pass to the last thing that John wrote, the book of the Revelation, and at once you come upon seven golden lampstands, not one lampstand now, but a lampstand represented in a sevenfold way.

You go on with John again and you come to the two olive trees in the Revelation. It is all of a piece, this revelation, and what is it? It is Christ.

But here in this chapter - "*... that stand by the Lord of the whole earth*". The two olive trees stand by the Lord of all the earth. Where do they stand? One on one side and one on the other of the lampstand or candlestick. So this candlestick represents Christ as the Lord of all the earth, and that as light and life. Men cannot live without light and they cannot live without life, so He stands here as Lord to govern the very existence of men. He stands right over the very existence of men and men cannot live without Him, cannot know without Him. In that sense of the very virtue and value of what He is, man's life depends upon Him. He is Lord.

He is not Lord as a despot. He is Lord by what He is in His essential value. Suppose we were in an awful predicament which was a matter of life and death, so that just a crust of bread which would save our life. Supposing a very puny little man we would heartily despise and hate in himself, in his physical appearance and in what he is in himself, had a crust of bread to give. By reason of what he had to give, he is lord of our life. Whatever we may think of him in himself, by reason of what he is in his resource for us, he is our Lord and master; our life depends on him. The Lord Jesus is not in Himself despicable, but what I am trying to impress is that it is in virtue of what He has and what He has is in virtue of what He is. He is Lord of all the earth. So the candlestick is the Lord Jesus, Lord of life and Lord of light for all the earth.

Sons of Oil

But while this candlestick is one, it is a collective oneness, a collective unity. That is what is meant by bringing these passages together, for these two olive trees are two sons of oil. Now, undoubtedly that refers to the Lord Jesus Himself, two aspects of Christ as Lord of all. Sons of oil. But when you come over to Romans and Galatians as we have read, "*If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*"; "*as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*" "*Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.*" We know that the oil is always a type of the Holy Spirit, so that in Romans and Galatians there are other sons of oil. He is the great Son of oil. The anointing, the fulness of the Spirit, is with Him. But there are other sons of oil that have the Spirit also. They are sons because they have the Spirit. That is the collective aspect

of the candlestick. It is a big thing with many branches, and you and I are branches if we have the Spirit of Christ, parts of Christ through whom His Spirit moves to make the testimony many-sided, far-reaching, with a wide range. That is, the whole testimony of the Lord Jesus demands the whole church, demands the members of Christ. It is a collective thing: sons in the Son, all possessing the Spirit and giving the value of the Spirit in light and life. That is the proof that we have the Spirit: that light and life in Christ is working through us that men behold our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16). The proof that we have the Spirit, that we are sons of oil, is that the same effect is the result of our being here as was in His case. In other words, what the Lord Jesus is is being expressed and manifested through us: light and life, life and light. That is the proof of sonship, that is the proof that we have the Spirit, that is the test.

Of course, in the actual setting of this for Israel at the moment these two olive trees related to the two men with whom these prophecies are concerned, Joshua and Zerubbabel, two sides of one. Joshua was the High Priest, as you see by the context; Zerubbabel was the governor, the governor of Judah. Speak unto Joshua, the high priest, and to Zerubbabel the governor. These are the two sons of oil in Israel; that is, the governor and the high priest, the ruler and the mediator, the lord and the saviour. Transferred to Christ, that is exactly the double aspect of Christ as expressed in the power of the Holy Spirit: Lord and Saviour, Ruler and Mediator. It is His work as God's exalted One to the throne at His right hand. "*God hath made him a prince*" (Acts 5:31) — that is where you start; "*and a Saviour*" — His work in grace. The Holy Spirit, then, is occupied with this twofold expression and manifestation of Christ in this age as Lord and Saviour, as Ruler and Mediator, as having all rights in authority and of grace. Joshua, Zerubbabel, both having their counterpart in Christ — Prince and Saviour.

The Oil of the Spirit

Now when you come to the oil here, you find two or three things that are connected with the oil, for what God is doing is to recover — and especially in a remnant — His full testimony. That is the history here. The captivity had taken place, a remnant had come back, they had set themselves to rebuild the house. They met many discouragements, many diversions, and so on, and the situation for Joshua and Zerubbabel was an exceedingly difficult one and they were tempted to give up, to lose heart, and then the Lord gives this vision that He, in the Unseen, is working. He is giving Himself to this end, to recover His full testimony in the midst of this remnant, this little company, the day of small things, a little remnant but not to be despised, because with them is God's full thought. So He gives this vision of the embodiment of His thought in the candlestick — Christ, and then the way in which He will realise it — by the oil of the Spirit.

And the first thing here, and this is very interesting to note, is that the prophet interrogates the interpreting angel with this question, "*What are these?*" What are these two olive trees? And the angel does not answer him directly, he evades the actual question and gives a larger answer. "*This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit*". That is what these olive trees are; not a direct answer but a very much better one than saying, These olive trees represent so-and-so. "*The word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel*". He is losing heart, he is feeling how impossible it is to recover all that has been lost and to establish it, how difficult the situation is, and then the word of the Lord is, it is all going to be met, answered, solved and achieved by My Spirit, by the oil. The oil will do it, My Spirit will do it. "*Not by might*", 'not by an army' (margin). Zerubbabel might have said, If only we had a mighty enough army, a great enough military force, if only we could overpower the opposition, establish things by force of arms! We have nothing, we are a weakened people, a wholly emaciated small company. 'Not by an army' — an army is not necessary; "*nor by power*" — that is, temporal power, our own natural might; — "*but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts*".

The Power of the Spirit

We know how true that has proved in the church. Look at the church in its history in its earliest days. Was it a great temporal force on the earth? No, it was a small company, a weak, despised company. It had nothing of standing in this world, and it was right up against the greatest world empires that have been known, up against that mighty empire of Rome which was setting itself in all its power to quench this newborn church with all the persecutions and martyrdoms and imprisonments and scatterings, and yet where is the Roman Empire and where is the church? How was it done? *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit"*. The Spirit of God has done it and done it through small things.

We can make a personal application. What am I, what are you, what are we as individuals and as companies? What can we do in this thing - God's fullest thought concerning Christ? If we look at ourselves and our resources, our position, our standing, we might very well lose heart and give up. But *"by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts"*. The first thing about the oil in this chapter and about the Spirit in the Word of God is that it is more powerful than all temporal and natural forces. The Spirit can do what seems impossible to man; the Holy Spirit can do it. That is the thing about the oil here — its mighty power to accomplish. It is only saying what Christ proved to be — the light and the life of men. Well, there may be many millions yet who are not saved, but go down through the twenty centuries of Christianity and see what Christ has become on this earth and how increasing a force He has become — the light and the life. There is no doubt about it. But how? Never by force of arms, never by any compulsion, but simply by the quiet, deep, unseen activity of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the oil, has done it. The power of the Spirit is the first thing that is here.

We mentioned one particular difficulty just now which is hinted at by that word *"Who art thou, O great mountain?"*; suddenly at that point. *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."* Suddenly the divine interpreter breaks in with that interrogation to an unseen mountain, a very real mountain, not just a hypothetical mountain, but not a literal mountain of rock. These people knew what was meant, and Zerubbabel knew what was meant. This mountain is not an alien, a foreign power in this world. No, at this time those foreign powers who had taken them into captivity and exile had let the remnant go back, for Cyrus had given his decree for return and rebuilding. What was the great mountain? It was the set system of Judaism in its unbelief; the great religious system represented by the Jews in their unbelief. That was the great mountain; the same mountain as that to which the Lord Jesus Himself referred when He said to His disciples, *"if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove"* (Matt. 17:20). What is this mountain? The terrific force of organised Judaism, traditional religion. There is no greater force in the way of the true testimony of Jesus and the pure working of the Holy Spirit than set and organised traditional religion. Nothing is a greater mountain. But to that great religious thing which is not of the Spirit, is not governed by the Holy Spirit, is not led by the Holy Spirit, is not a spiritual thing, which is such a menace and obstruction to what is of the Spirit, the Lord says, Thou shalt become a plain before Zerubbabel, before Jesus as Lord. Jesus as Lord, the Zerubbabel aspect, the prince on the throne; before Him even this thing has got to yield. Some of us do know the terrible power of a set, fixed, established Christianity in its earthly form as a system, against the thing that is really spiritual, of the Holy Spirit, and how impossible it seems to get on in the presence of that. But here is the word — Before Zerubbabel, before Jesus as Lord, thou shalt become a plain. Thou shalt say to this mountain, Be removed! This is surely a word of heartening. You may have mountains, though not that particular mountain. You cannot have a mountain bigger than this one, all your mountains come within this same range. If Jesus is Lord, there is no mountain too much for Him. What is the mountain that is troubling you just now? That mountain can be made a plain when Jesus is Lord in your

faith. When your faith lays hold of Him as Lord, there is nothing that cannot be levelled, be as nothing before Him. Power is a mark of the Spirit.

The Sufficiency of the Spirit

Look at all the things in this chapter which speak of sufficiency. *Seven* golden pipes with *seven* lamps and *two* olive trees, and then, strangely, the figure is changed and it is two branches. The olive trees had two branches that emptied oil from tree through branch into the great bowl upon the top, this emptying itself through all the pipes. It is a picture of fulness. Seven in Scripture is the number of spiritual fulness. It is not just a reservoir. Here are *olive* trees: there is no end to the supply. The Holy Spirit is sufficient, that is the point, sufficient for everything that God wants. If we are in what the Lord wants, then the Holy Spirit is all-sufficient for that; there is fulness.

The Spirit of Grace

Then another thing about the oil is that it is the oil of grace. The Holy Spirit is the grace of God in all sufficiency for whatever we need; grace however much we need grace, in whatever way we need grace. He is called "*the Spirit of grace and supplication*" (Zech. 12:10).

The Spirit's Work a Hidden One

I must not stop with all the details, but that is sufficient, with, perhaps one closing word. We must remember that the work that the Lord is doing, this testimony concerning His Son, this manifestation of the greatness, fulness and sufficiency of Christ is all spiritual. Zerubbabel thought in his difficulty, if only there were more temporal forces to count upon and natural resources to draw upon, if only he could see things happening and see God coming out and doing things before his eyes, if only it were in that realm of natural, sentient appreciation and apprehension, how much easier it would be. But the Lord says, "*by my Spirit*". We are not going to see God coming out in mighty manifestations of His power as we might see things done by a great army, temporal forces. It is going to be hidden, secret, quiet, without demonstration. We are not going to see much at all in that realm, but the most tremendous, the most terrific thing that is happening in this universe will be going on. That is why that little phrase, that little question, is put in — "*Who hath despised the day of small things?*" "*By my Spirit*", says the Lord of hosts, before whom the great mountain comes down, is like a plain. That tremendous thing, that mountain-removing, levelling power, is done in a day of small things, a remnant, despised, laughed at. You know how they laughed at them when Nehemiah started to build the wall. They laughed, scoffed, made jokes. "*If a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall*"! — that sort of thing. Little, despised people, and yet this infinite power of God working through that despised people, and the result was that it was more than a match for all the powers that be. That is the history of anything that God has done. It may not seem like that, and this word is to recall us, perhaps rebuke us, but also to enhearten us, to encourage.

The Lord is set upon something. Are we sure about it? What is He set upon? If what I am saying now is not true, we had better quit. God's concern is Jesus Christ — to have Him established in this universe as Lord of all. Now, is that true? But there is another thing which goes with it — is God bent upon having that through us, through a people? Are we bound up with that? Have we been called for that very purpose — to be the means, the instrument, the channel, of establishing the testimony of Jesus, that is, the Lordship of Christ and the sovereignty of Christ? If we are not in it, let us quit, I say. This is either true or not true. Then, if it is true, what about the difficulties, difficulties in ourselves, difficulties outside, a mighty enemy, all set against it? How are we going to meet this great mountain? "*By my Spirit*". We also are sons of oil. The whole point upon which this turns for us is this: He is the fulness and we are partakers of His fulness. The same thing

is said of us as of Jesus Christ; the difference is in measure - He is the fulness and we are partakers of His fulness. We are not Christ personally, we are not God's Son in that essential sense, but the same thing is said about us. "*Sons of oil*"; that is, joined to the Lord like those branches to the stem, one with the centre, joined to Him in organic union. The same Spirit as was in Him, flowed through Him, worked through Him and triumphed through Him, is in us. We are sons in that sense, we have the Spirit of Christ. The same Spirit that has triumphed through Him is working and going to work out His triumph through us. "*Not by might*". What might are you looking for, what power? "*By my Spirit*" — there is nothing that can match that. The difficulty is we always want to feel and see and the Lord works so quietly. See what man's workings are like, trying to blast a way with terrific force, a way to power, to pre-eminence. How long will it last if they get it? See what man does to get his dominion; the crash, and noise, and thunder of it all, power demonstrated; to nature it is awful, a shattering thing. That is man's way of getting pre-eminence. Go out into the garden. See what that little buried seed has to contend with, maybe tons of soil, surrounded by stones and rock and the forces of death working upon it. Slowly it comes up; the tons of soil give way, even the rock has to yield. It comes up: you hear no sound, you will not hear splitting and rending rocks, but up it comes. Eventually it will be a mighty tree. You heard nothing, there was no demonstration, no shouting. It was just the power of life quietly at work, but it has done the thing, it is there, it is triumphant. That is what we have to be satisfied with, and it is so difficult for these souls of ours to be satisfied with that. We must have display, we must have something that speaks of power, position, so that we are somebody. The Lord says, No, none of that; My way is the quiet way of the Spirit. The greatest power in this universe is that quiet working of the Spirit; the end will be with that. The Lord give us grace to accept this as His own word to us.

Chapter 3 – The divine Testimony (cont.)

Reading: Zech. 4:1-7.

We did not complete our previous meditation on the first of the main issues arising from these and other Scriptures which were brought together, therefore we shall now pursue the matter a little further, and I may say that the word which is governing the whole of our meditation in all its parts is Zech. 4:6:

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.”

We might abbreviate it for our purpose — *“By my Spirit”*.

The first matter which is before us, that which is predominant, supreme, is the divine testimony, the testimony of God which is symbolically set forth in this candlestick all of gold, and we were saying that the testimony of God is the glory of God, lying behind all the divine activities, being the thing which motivated the very bringing into being of man, the design of humanity originally being the glory of God and man in the first instance failed. That testimony was then taken up by a thin line of witnesses: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and so on. In a very real sense, the testimony of the glory of God rested upon those individuals; they carried the enormous responsibility of being here on this earth where almost entirely the enemy had succeeded in veiling that glory, marring that glory. They stood on the earth as lonely figures to preserve the testimony, the glory of God, and all the force of the Evil One was concentrated against them, but they triumphed. Israel was then brought in to be a corporate vessel of that testimony that amongst the nations they should be a nation for the glory of God, in which that glory was seen, shown forth. Ultimately Israel failed. The testimony was passed on and transferred to the church; the glory of God blazed up anew in the church at the beginning. In the course of time, the church, speaking quite generally, has failed in this matter, and we find in the book of the Revelation the Lord sorely grieved, deeply concerned, about the testimony, pointing out that it is one thing to have a form or a candlestick or a lamp-stand, and another thing to have a blazing testimony, and where the testimony has gone, a lamp-stand will have to be removed unless there is recovery. The church failed, and then the book of the Revelation shows us that the testimony is passed on to and taken up by a company called overcomers, and the testimony is consummated in them in final triumph.

Then we saw that all this, from the first intentions of God as to man through that series of personal links, into and through Israel, on to the church and to the overcomer, is gathered up in the one glorious witness, the Lord Jesus. All that went before pointed on to Him; all that followed took its character from Him so far as the glory of God, the testimony of God, was concerned.

So the great concern, business and issue for the people of God is for His glory, for His testimony which is His glory, to be here on this earth for the glory of God. That is the thing that matters, nothing matters beside that, everything has got to be handed up to that, considered in the light of that. The one plumbline, measuring reed, for Jerusalem, for the altar, for the priesthood, for everything and everyone, is the glory of God, every measurement is to relate to the glory of God. The city in the end is seen having the glory of God. The measurement of the city is given.

Now on two earlier occasions we have this measuring. In Zechariah 2 the measuring of the city, the measuring of things, and in Revelation 11, the measuring of the altar, the measuring of things, and it is all related to the testimony of God. The measurement spiritually is all a matter of the glory of God. That is, what counts with you and with me is just and only what works out for the glory of God. It is not how much we do, how busy we are, how much we know, how long we have been Christians, it is none of these

subsidiary things. The measurement which stands at last is just the degree of the glory of God which comes out of our lives. How much there is for His glory is the thing that abides. We may take it that nothing else will abide. That is the challenge and it may be that in the face of such a challenge many of our hearts sink. Some of us have lived a few years and done a good deal for the Lord and we are wondering really how much glory has come to the Lord from our lives. Some of you have longer lives before you and this challenge almost frightens you in such a world as this is, so much to contend with in ourselves and outside of ourselves, with the cost that is bound up with this matter of the glory of God and it is a great cost. We say, "*Who is sufficient for these things?*"; how can it be? That is just the value of the underlined word — "*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts*".

It was ever thus; in the great concentric expression of the testimony of God, it was the same. Did He come to perfect and establish that testimony? Is it true that the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ? Then it was by the Spirit. The testimony of God was taken up at Jordan, the Spirit came upon Him, and immediately the enemy challenged, offered Him the kingdoms of this world and the glory in exchange for the glory of God. It is always like that — the kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof in exchange for the glory of God. But by that Spirit of anointing which had come upon Him at the Jordan He met that challenge to the glory of God. Ah, He met it under fiery trial and you remember what the apostle said to some believers in fiery trial, speaking about their afflictions, their sufferings, for the testimony's sake, "*The Spirit of glory ... rests upon you*" (1 Peter 4:14). In trial, in adversity, in suffering, the Spirit of glory rests upon you. What is that? The Spirit that was upon the Lord Jesus, for the express purpose of perfecting that testimony. The Holy Spirit came for the express purpose of perfecting and establishing the testimony of God, the glory of God. Wherever you find the Holy Spirit coming, in symbol or in actuality, you find the immediate result is the glory of God. Was it the tabernacle filled with the glory? Was it the temple filled with the glory? What did it point to? It pointed to the day of Pentecost, when, the church brought in, the Spirit came and filled, and it was glory. That was a day of glory, God glorified in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. You know how, again and again when we are told that the Spirit came upon them or they were filled with the Spirit, the scene is a scene of glory. They glorified God and everybody has to take account of God.

Yes, the Holy Spirit came on Him for the perfecting of that testimony, for that glorifying of God, and seeing that He had accepted that position of entire dependence, upon God His Father for everything, we are right in saying that there is a sense, the Son of Man sense, in which Jesus could not have glorified God apart from the anointing. He depended upon the anointing for everything and it was through the eternal Spirit that He offered Himself (Hebr. 9:14). From beginning to end, it was a matter of the Holy Spirit perfecting the testimony, carrying it on to finality, and it was done. If He had been left to Himself, it would not have been done. Do not misunderstand that. I am not speaking of Him now as God nor as Son of God. I am speaking of Him in that manhood, that representative manhood, to work out the thing that had been set aside through Satan in man. But the fact is that, immense as was the task, the work, the purpose, the conflict, the suffering, the cost, through the eternal Spirit God was glorified in Jesus Christ and that testimony to the glory of God was secured in Him forever. The glorifying of the Lord Jesus in the end was because He had glorified the Father. Our glorification will be because God has been glorified in us.

Now then, our fears can go, our sense of dread can be dismissed, our weakness need not be the thing which dominates our consciousness or our outlook. "*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, said the Lord of hosts.*"

God's Instruments Stripped of Their Own Glory

Now here is the real value of significance of that little interrogation — “*Who hath despised the day of small things?*” (Zech. 4:10). Out of the millions who went into exile, just these forty-two thousand odd would pay the price of letting go their comforts and possessions and all that they had come to settle into in their exile, and go back for the Lord’s testimony. Comparatively, out of the millions, a very small thing and in weakness; coming back with nothing, coming back to a desolate land, nothing there for them, nothing to bring with them, weak, impoverished, stripped, an afflicted people in the land — a day of small things. But there is something very challenging in that word, “*Who hath despised the day of small things?*” We have not really got the value and force of those words. They have very often been used as a cover for a kind of smallness that is not of God. Some people seem to think that if a thing is despised, it is necessarily something very important, that there is a value about it. Not necessarily. God Almighty is committed to that which is standing for His glory. That is no small thing, you cannot despise that, and the fact remains that whenever God has sought to get peculiar glory for Himself, He has taken something which had no glory in itself. Ah yes, you may despise it, but with God it is elect, precious, it is something of tremendous value. You would never despise whatever the thing was in itself if it was standing wholly for the glory of God and you understand that such a thing finds God committed in His anointing to that.

God has ever been under obligation to strip His instruments of their own glory. A Moses with all his Egyptian glory must go for forty years to the desert to be emptied out and brought to be the man who says, I cannot! before the glory of God in Israel can come in. A Gideon’s twenty-two thousand must be brought down to three hundred if God is going to be glorified. But Moses now is not a man to be despised. Let them despise Moses and say, Does the Lord speak only by Moses? Does He not speak by us also? And they despised him, and it just puts in there, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). Now then, see what God will do. God is committed, and the glory of God appeared at the gate of the tabernacle and took up the challenge.

And the three hundred of Gideon was a small thing, but not to be despised. The principle holds good. Sometimes it takes the Lord years and years to get us sufficiently empty, meek, small, to bring in glory to Him and that explains His dealings with us. When He has got us small enough and empty enough, then He will begin His real testimony in us. Not by might, nor by power of any kind whatsoever, but by My Spirit said Jehovah of hosts, the Lord God of Sabaoth.

The Glory of God in the Hands of the Holy Spirit

That is the message. The testimony of God, which is the glory of God, *must* be in the hands of the Holy Spirit and can only be confirmed, established and perfected by the Holy Spirit. The testimony of God is not a teaching, a system of truth. It is the glory of God. Oh, let us get that quite clearly and be quite sure about it. We may have all the doctrine, the perfection of doctrine, and we may call that having the testimony. We have got to see, that we are not occupied and not to be occupied with things at all, even though those things be divine truths and divine order. While the divine glory will require truth and right order and perhaps many *things*, these things can become the technique, the mere framework and shell. And we must remember that, although the tabernacle was constituted and constructed to the last pin according to divine instructions, it did not function until the glory came in. The temple was an exhaustive thing in the matter of detail and everything, to the last detail, was done according to divine commandment and there it stood, perfect as to its form, but dead until the glory came in. While we must have the form of things as God has prescribed, we do not stop there. We can have it, and oh, we have seen it, things just an imitation of something in the Scriptures, in the New Testament, a taking up of the technique or doctrine and order, and dead. We must have that, but the testimony is not that. The testimony is the glory. Is the glory there? Oh, those poor lives that are so legal, meticulous about what you ought to do and what you

ought not to do, what you ought to wear and what you ought not to wear, where you ought to go and where you ought not to go; in these things so particular and careful and imposing some heavy burden. Now it may be all right to be concerned for things being right, but is the glory being brought in?

It is the point from which you start that matters. If you are bringing in the glory, people will say, How do you get the glory? And the glory, the testimony of God, will be the plumbline which will show the bulges; not technique, not the doctrine, not the legalism; no, but the glory. If you have the glory of the Lord in your heart, in your life, I will want to know how to get it and I will follow. But if you come to me with all kinds of, Thou shalt and Thou shalt not, and all those legal things, (and you may be quoting them from the Scripture at me), and I do not find the glow of the divine glory which draws my heart after the Lord, then I shall say that it is an empty shell, that it is dead, it does not help. We begin with the glory.

That is how it is in the New Testament. Perhaps you say that in the Old Testament they put the thing just as God prescribed and then the glory came. Yes, you are pointing on. At Pentecost it was the other way round, or, shall I say, more full. Things in Christ, in heaven, had been perfected and the glory came here, and then by the glory of that which was perfected in Him, the doctrine followed, the prescription came afterwards. The glory was there, the power was there, the anointing was there, and then people began to learn what they should do and what they should not do. The dynamic came first. It is necessary to have it that way. *"By my Spirit"*. We can do nothing about this testimony. I cannot help you to glorify God; you cannot help me to glorify God apart from the Holy Spirit. Nothing that we can provide or prescribe can do it. The most perfect order that we can secure will not do it. It is *"by My Spirit"*. It is not our abilities, intellectual or otherwise, not our personality, no, nothing at all of man. It is *"by my Spirit, said the Lord"*.

But it is *"by my Spirit"*. It will be done where the Spirit has His way, God will be glorified. Beloved. If the Spirit of glory is in us and upon us, He is the Spirit of the God of glory, He is the Spirit of the glorified Christ and His whole object is to bring about that testimony in us and through us — in strange ways, but the issue is just that.

Paul may seem to be dying in Asia, the sentence of death in him, despairing of life, the enemy seeming to be triumphant. That is not the end. *"... that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raised the dead"* (2 Cor. 1:9). And after that he wrote a good deal to the glory of God and lived a good deal to the glory of God after that.

Yes, we may go very deep, far down, but the Spirit of God in us is not going to be drowned, is not going to be swamped, is not going to be overcome of death. The Spirit of God in us is yet going to secure the testimony of God, the glory of God. Oh, count much upon the Holy Spirit, recognize the indispensability of the Holy Spirit, do see that the Spirit is come for this express purpose; in you, in us, upon us, for one object — the glory of God. In all times when it would seem to be going otherwise, you and I must lay hold of the Spirit of God and say, You are here in me for the glory of God and you have got to bring glory to God out of this affliction, out of this persecution, out of this difficult situation! The Lord give us that strong faith attitude towards the Holy Spirit for the testimony of God.

This a brief, I trust concise, one-noted message — *"By my Spirit"*. It is the negative - *not* this, *not* that, not any one of a whole number of things upon which the world and men count for achieving their ends; not these things at all, but — *"by my Spirit"*. That alone, but *"by my Spirit"*, yes, a thousand times, yes! *"By my Spirit"* it can be. A day of small things, weak, suffering, afflicted, despised, nothing — yes, but *"by my Spirit"* all is possible and all will be if you will live by the Spirit. The Lord help us.

Chapter 4 – The Vessel of the Divine Testimony

Reading: Zech. 1:16; 4:9; Hag. 2:4; John 2:13-22; Eph. 3:21.

In our meditations so far we have been occupied with the first of the great issues which arise from the Scriptures, namely, the divine testimony which is the glory of God.

Now we go on to think of the vessel of that testimony, the vessel of the glory of God. It is variously designated. Sometimes it is the house, the temple, the church, the Body, the city, and the difference in designation does not alter the identity. It is the same object, but the difference of title is to emphasize some specific aspect of function. We need not stay with that at the moment. We mention it so that no one will get any mentality that discriminates between the identity of this vessel. It is the same, whatever its designation. It is the house of God. It is the temple of God, it is the church, a habitation of God through the Spirit, it is the Body of Christ.

The Object of the Vessel of the Testimony

We shall begin by thinking for a little while about the object of this vessel of the testimony of the glory of God. Of course, ultimately, it is for the glory of God. It is for His testimony. But within that there are other things. The thing which I want to establish and stress at this moment is that this vessel of God's testimony has as its object to make *immediate* and *actual* the presence of God and fellowship with Him. I underline the word 'immediate' and the word 'actual'. God is present everywhere, God can be met anywhere, in the most remote, out of the way desolation, you can meet God, God can meet you. He is immanent in every place, but that is not enough for Him or for us. The Scriptures throughout indicate quite clearly that God has a more immediate thought than just His universal presence. They speak of God dwelling with men, tabernacling with men, making His habitation among men. The great final thing of the Scriptures is "*The tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them ... and be their God*" (Rev. 21:3). That is something more immediate and actual than the all-pervading God, and so this vessel has as its object the presenting of God in some more immediate and actual way for purposes of fellowship with man.

Fellowship with God in Christ

The quickest way to get to an understanding of that is to recognize at once that supremely and ultimately the house of God is not a thing at all, but a Person. All the things which have been called 'the house of God' are mere symbols, all pointing toward the Person and that Person is the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus. The house of God is a Person, and not a thing. Christ, that very Name, the Christos, means the Anointed One, and it is in the Anointed and because of the anointing, that God is found and fellowship with God is possible and actual. God is here, Emmanuel, God with us; God was in Christ.

So we come once more to that very comprehensive but at the same time very exclusive little phrase — "*in Christ*". Everything of God is in Christ for immediate, practical purposes. Now, while men might and do meet God right out in the universe, so to speak, — a lonely man in some far-off desolation may call upon God and God may sovereignly and mercifully respond to His call and he may come to some kind of touch with God and initial knowledge of God and have some mercy from God, that man cannot live on that. But the same Spirit of God Who has met him in that very general way, if he will give himself to God and seek to live his life under God's hand, will be led most definitely to the Lord Jesus. And he will be led on to understand, to know, what the Lord Jesus is and will come to find, and will have to find, that all things are in Christ, and that, while God has very mercifully met him in that general way, God is jealous for and loyal to His Son and will lead the man to Christ. Everything that is of God is in Christ. That is elementary,

but we cannot understand the meaning of the house of God until we recognize that the house of God is pre-eminently a living Person, not a system of teaching.

That includes some very precious and very vital things. Contemplate Him for a moment. It is in Him and in Him alone that God is really met, that God is really seen and known. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). What a tremendous statement that is in Hebrews 12 from verse 21: "*Ye are come unto mount Zion ... the heavenly Jerusalem ... the church of the firstborn, to innumerable hosts of angels ... to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling ... and to God.*" Ye are come. I say that is a tremendous statement if we really rejoiced in its force. It surely says most clearly that everything that God has provided and intended for fellowship with Himself is now no longer a matter of things in an earthly system but a matter of Christ, for that is the force of the whole letter to the Hebrews. The whole letter is Christ, the Son over God's house, and when you have come to Christ and are in Christ, you have come, you are come, to everything that God has provided and intended for fellowship with Himself. The argument of that letter is, why have any longer things that are only meant to point to Someone when you have the Someone Himself? That is what the writer of that letter is trying to say. Why have temples of an outward form when you have that to which they all pointed? Why have sacrifices when you have the Sacrifice to which they all pointed? Why the blood of sprinklings continually when you have the Blood? Christ has gathered it all up in Himself and He is all this and in Him you have all that and no longer need what is only a type.

It is an immense statement with a tremendous challenge and Christendom has missed that point altogether and goes on with its form and outward system. Christ is the house of God and in Christ you are in the house of God, for God is there.

But, as we know, while that is personally true of the Lord Jesus, it is resolved also into a corporate reality, a corporate house or a corporate body, because of Christ's presence in every part. Whether it be a spiritual house, living stones, the very livingness of the stones is the presence of Christ, the living One; but it is one life, not fragments, broken-off fragments of life, not a life cut up into a thousand stones, but one life making all the stones one corporate whole, one house. Or the Body — it is one because Christ is in every part, in every member, and it is His presence which makes this house one, so one that there is almost a confusion when you come to try and define in human language. How can Christ be the Head and the Body at the same time, for He is. Someone was challenging the other day on the question of the Godhead of Christ and saying, How can He be Father and Son at the same time? Well, the statement in Scripture is that He is, that is all. "*His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father ...*" (Isa. 9:6). The Father of Eternity is His Name. "*Unto us a son is given*" Who is "*Everlasting Father*". This is where language breaks down and human ideas go to pieces. You cannot follow that — Father and Son at the same time. He is Head and members. It is one Christ.

So in Christ there is identification with Him and we in Christ become a habitation of God through the Spirit, the house of God, as He is. "*As he is, so are we in this world*" (1 John 4:17). There is only one Anointing; there are no two anointings or more than two. The anointing upon Christ is the same anointing as we receive. The word is that we are anointed with Him or in Him. There have never been thousands of anointings, there has only been one, and it is the one anointing which makes one sanctuary.

The Body of Christ Constituted by the Anointing

My special emphasis is that it is the anointing which makes the house of God, which makes the church, which makes the Body of Christ. It is not true (and will you take this to heart, probably you have not consciously or deliberately been caught in this mistake, but it is somehow or other a thing which does get into the mentality of people), that if

you have and hold the *truth* of the church, the truth of the Body of Christ, you are somehow more the Body of Christ than other people who do not hold that truth; and that is not a fact. The fact is there, whether you have the truth or not. The truth will be of value, the truth will make the fact, perhaps, more operative and should do, but the fact lies behind the truth, and those who have never seen the truth of the Body of Christ or the house of God and are in Christ, are as much a part of that house or are as much that house, as those who have all the light about it. That ought to save us from those schisms which come along the line of light, for light can divide if we are not very careful. Unconsciously, because we have seen something, we divide ourselves off from those who have not seen. They have not seen what we have seen! There is something in that very attitude and that very suggestion which is an insinuation of division. The house is one because Christ is one.

"*Is Christ divided?*" (1 Cor. 1:13). That was a challenge made to the Corinthians and a little later you will remember the apostle said to those Corinthians, *Ye are a temple, a sanctuary of God, of the Holy Spirit (3:16). "If any man destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy."* I know in another place it says, "*Your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost*" (1 Cor. 6:19). That is the individual, but at this particular point the apostle is not speaking about the individual. He is saying to that whole local company, *Ye are, collectively, a temple of God and if any man destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy.*

How is the temple of God destroyed? "*Is Christ divided?*" What does that follow? "*Each one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas*" and so on. Destroying the temple of God is dividing the Christ by making parties amongst the Lord's people and that means judgment from God. Why? Because it is sin (I am not saying it is *the* sin) against the Holy Ghost. It is a work contrary to the Spirit of Christ Who constitutes the house one by His anointing, Who makes the oneness of Christ by His presence. It is quite impossible really to be under the immediate and complete government of the Holy Spirit and have spiritual schism. That is a tremendous statement in the light of things as they are, but it is a fact. It is sin and it must bring judgment and death and that is why "*judgment must begin at the house of God*" (1 Peter 4:17).

Now these are very vital and solemn matters for us. They must touch us very deeply in life every day. Let us understand, in the first place, that it is not the truth about things that makes the thing. The thing is there. The truth is of great importance for the facts to be led out and lived out. Christ is one. He is the temple and if we are in Him that temple makes us a part of itself, it becomes a corporate matter.

The Practical Implications of the Body of Christ

I would like to stay with many of the details which must, of course, issue from such a consideration. I would ask you to open your hearts to the solemn and tremendous fact that is there. The Lord Jesus Christ has so identified Himself in the Holy Ghost with His own and them with Himself that what is true of Him is true of them, what is done to them is done to Him, and we cannot have a relationship with the Lord which ignores our relationship with His own, which fails in our relationship with His own. It is a false position entirely for anyone to claim to love the Lord Jesus and to be devoted to the Lord Jesus and for such a one to be careless, indifferent or even worse than that in their concern and interest and attitude toward others who are Christ's. It is a false position. In the long run, in the end, that is going to find us out and it is just there that we are going to receive the deeds done in the body when we stand before the Lord (2 Cor. 5:10). Ah, we perhaps may have those sins go to judgment beforehand and may be already suffering spiritual limitation, limitation of the Spirit's operations in us, the Spirit's blessing, because of that very thing. This is not because our attitude toward the *Lord* is a wrong one, not because there is any lack of love or devotion in our hearts directly to the Lord, but because we have failed to see that we cannot isolate the Lord from His own,

and the Lord has made it final, utter. *"Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me."* *"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me"* (Matt. 25:45,40).

That is only one of those Gospel forecasts of the nature of the Body of Christ. I say there are many other such practical issues from such a contemplation, and we must take them home to our hearts and not get into false positions which mean limitation.

It is so possible for us to get a kind of abstract, ethereal apprehension of divine truths and then to feel that it is a kind of anticlimax to come down and talk about the person at our side every day, that it is in another realm. It is nothing of the kind. It is a false position to get up into some heavenly realm of spiritual things which misses the practical matters of everyday life. The Word of God will put us right on that. Listen! *"O death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting? ... Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* You know where that comes, that matchless chapter on resurrection and resurrection order (1 Cor. 15). *"There are celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial ..."*. Oh, it is a wonderful revelation of things we have never known of, never thought, seen or conceived, of the order of glorified humanity in resurrection, the mighty victory over death through our Lord Jesus Christ. *"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* *"Now concerning the collection ..."*. What a pity they cut up the chapters at that point. Is that an anticlimax? *"Now concerning the collection for the saints"*. That is no anticlimax; that is how God keeps things together on a practical basis. Don't you get kite-flying and forget you have solid ground under your feet and there are practical matters that relate to the Body of Christ. *"Now concerning the collection for the saints"*. Glorious resurrection and glorious celestial body, the order of the heavenlies; yes, but the poor saints around you every day also need looking after.

I could multiply that from the Scriptures again and again. The letter to the Ephesians is just one glorious example of that. The first chapters are wonderful chapters of revelation of things eternal and heavenly such as have never come to man before, and without the mechanical break of chapters, you move right in — Husbands, wives; children, parents; a lot of practical matters, no anticlimax in that.

Now this house of God is a glorious thing for the glory of God, but the glory of God in the house of God shines in many little practical ways. The Lord give us grace to receive it!

Chapter 5 – The Vessel of the divine Testimony (cont.)

Reading: Zech. 1:16; 4:9; Hag. 2:4; John 2:13-22; Matt. 18:20; Eph. 3:21.

The phrase of Scripture which is really governing all our meditations is in Zechariah 4:6: *“not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” “By my Spirit”.*

We brought a considerable number of passages of Scripture together, both in the Old and New Testaments, and from them we saw that there arose certain major issues which govern the whole course of spiritual history, the first of which is the testimony of God, the divine testimony. In Zechariah 4 we have a vision of a candlestick all of gold, something which appears, as we have seen, in other Scriptures, both in the Old and New Testaments, and that candlestick, both in the material of which it is made — pure refined gold — and in the function which it serves of illumination, sets forth or stands for the divine testimony, the testimony of God. And the testimony of God is the glory of God. To summarise what we have said, from beginning to end, the one thing which is of supreme concern to God is His glory and that is the issue eventually connected with all God’s activities and interests.

In our previous meditation, we passed on to the second issue arising, that is the vessel for that testimony. Here in Zechariah and Haggai, the house of the Lord is very much to the fore and that again is no new idea. In various intimations in earliest times, and then in representation and type in tabernacle and temple, that house of the Lord appears. In the New Testament it comes up in the new form of the church and the churches, and ultimately in the body of overcomers. We were occupied with the object of this vessel of the testimony, the house of God, and we saw that the main object of such a vessel is to make immediate and actual the presence of God for purposes of fellowship with Him.

Then we went on to see that the house of God, the vessel of testimony, is not a thing. It may be typified and represented in things of old, but supremely it is not a thing at all, it is a Person and that Person is God’s Son, the Lord Jesus.

What we have just read in John’s Gospel is very impressive when we recognize the connection — the temple at Jerusalem and what was happening there and what the Lord did and the motive behind His action. And then immediately, almost as by a deliberate act of confusing them, He said, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”*, showing how the natural mind fastens upon one idea; the spiritual mind has an entirely different idea of the house of God. The natural mind, even the religious natural mind, thinks of the house of God as some place constructed by man in a certain location. The spiritual conception of the house of God is Christ and what it means to be in Christ, to find God and meet with God in Christ.

Matt. 18:20 is the outworking of that. What is the church? What is the house of God? Where is it? It is where two or three are gathered into His Name, that is all. You need nothing more than that to make the house of God. You have that and you are satisfied. If you do not have that and you have all the rest, it is but an empty shell. The glory of God is in the house of God and it is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

That, I think, is all very simple, but, as we were seeing, it carries with it many practical challenges. The vessel of the testimony, the vessel of the glory of God, is Christ and Christ now as imparting Himself to His own, to believers, making them with Him one dwelling place of God, one place for the divine glory. And, may I say it again, elementary as it is, yet I am sure that constant re-emphasis and reminder is necessary, the thing which is going to prove that any life or any company of the Lord’s people really represent the house of God, is not their confession of faith. It is not their doctrine, not their

religious practice, their tradition or any such thing; it is that the glory of God is there. What I mean is this: you and I have to be supremely concerned with this one thing — that there is the glory of God really to be found in our lives and that the glory of God is really to be found in our gathering together. It should be that we immediately, in coming together at any time wherever we may be, if it is only two or three gathered into His Name, make it our exercise that the thing which pre-eminently marks us out as the dwelling-place of the Lord is that His glory is found amongst us.

You remember in the early days of the church, as recorded in the Book, that was a very impressive, a very powerful, feature. In the Old Testament, we are told that when Solomon's temple was completed, all things were made after the pattern, God's prescribed order had been adhered to and everything was as God required it, the glory filled the house and even the priests had to go out; they could not abide in the glory there (2 Chron. 7:1-2). That is a type, a principle. You see, in the old dispensation, although those priests were clothed in garments which represented or typified a condition suitable for God's presence, actually and literally they were not suitable for God's presence and the presence of God was not a type. It was reality and the real presence of God requires more than a typified suitability, it requires an actual suitability, and so they had to go out, they could not abide the glory.

Now, in the New Testament, you find such people as Ananias and Sapphira coming into that which represented very truly, very literally and actually, the house of God. The Holy Spirit was there, the glory was there, and everybody was knowing the glory. Ananias and Sapphira came in a condition unsuitable to the actual presence of God and they were smitten and died. And we are told that of the rest no man dared join himself to them. The very glory was the safeguard against an adhesion of unsuitable flesh.

And again, the apostle says to some saints, that, given the freedom and right operation and order of the Holy Spirit, the unbeliever coming in will fall down and say, God is here, God is among you! (1 Cor. 14:25).

It is the glory of His presence which makes the church, the house of God what it ought to be and what it is supposed to be. I suggest to you that this is something about which we must pray much and be very much exercised. It is so possible and so easy to get together as the Lord's people and have our regular rota of meetings. The meeting time comes round and we come together and in that meeting a certain order is followed, of practice, of speech, hymns and prayers and so on. We can go on and it may become just our Christian procedure and the real impact of the divine presence may not be registered, not to be felt, not to be met, and we may go away as we came. Ought it to be so, brethren? Ought it ever to be possible to go into the presence of God and just go away as we came without something impressed upon us? We must have real exercise about this matter that every time we gather, two or three or more, there is the registration that God is in the midst, the glory is there.

I feel very much that what is needed today by the Lord's people is a recovery of the glory with all that the glory means. I do not mean just the ecstasy — there will be the ecstasy and the rejoicing and the gladness — but I mean a solemn impact, the witness that God is consciously among men.

Then we are able to understand clearly the meaning of the early chapters of the book of the Revelation, why it was that the Lord came to challenge the churches as He did. For some He has certain commendations for they have many good points. Some of them are faithful to the doctrine and persistent and energetic and even patient in labours for the Lord. They have His Name and are zealous for it, and other things are there all to the good, but the Lord is not satisfied. Even with these things the Lord does not see fit to give assurance that the testimony, or the vessel of testimony, can continue to stand before Him, and that is very searching. It means this, that you and I can have a zeal for

the Lord, can be jealous for the fundamentals of the faith, be very much concerned for the creed, the Deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Scriptures and all such things, and we may be very busy and giving ourselves and even unto great patience serving the Lord in much activity, and yet it may all fall short of that satisfaction which the Lord desires and demands and He sees with it all a lack of the glory, the lampstand is not burning with the glory. I say that at an end time this matter of the glory of the Lord in the midst of His people is a very, very important one and we must ask the Lord very much about the recovery of the glory. It has got to come back. Ah, it has come back. There is a sense in which it seems to have lifted and removed from the church in general, but it is to be found in its fulness in that company of overcomers. Well, that is the object of the vessel. It may do many things but *the* thing above all things which justifies it is that it preserves the testimony of God which is the glory of God.

The Basis of the Vessel of Testimony

Now we pass to another thing about this vessel, that is as to its basis, and may I urge upon you not to think too objectively as we are meditating. I mean by that, do not get the church mentally somewhere out there, somewhere either in the Bible or in the world. It is here and it is you, and what we are saying has got to be a matter that comes right home to us now.

Do you remember there was a point in David's life when he exclaimed, This is the house of God! (1 Chron. 22:1). Do you remember its connection? The context says that Satan stood up to tempt David to number Israel and David fell into Satan's snare and commanded the numbering. Joab for once was right and came out gloriously. Joab said to David, The Lord add to you more and more! In effect he said, The Lord has multiplied you greatly, the Lord has given you much and the Lord can give you much more, why do you want to do this thing and grieve the Lord? But David was determined and he thrust the good counsel of Joab aside and pressed on and numbered Israel and took the sum. And then the angel of the Lord came and offered him famine, pestilence or falling before his enemies and he was in a strait, not knowing which to choose. But compelled to make a choice, he said, I must fall into the hands of the Lord! and the awful pestilence started and went on, smiting young and old up and down the land, wiping out that grand total, undoing all his census for him and making it foolish, ridiculous, of no value. At long last David came to the threshing-floor of Ornan and the angel of the Lord met him. David on his face before the Lord appealed to the Lord. I have sinned, punish me, judge me; not these others, let them go, I am responsible! The Lord said to the angel, it is enough, put up now thy sword!

Well, briefly, there was a threshing-floor of Ornan, there was Ornan threshing with his oxen. David bought the floor and all that was in it, paid the full sum for it and built an altar there and sacrificed unto the Lord and then exclaimed, This is the house of the Lord! The context in Chronicles tells us that the ark and the tent were elsewhere, far away, and David could not go to them for fear of the Lord. Now he says, This is the house of the Lord! It seems as though it came to him by revelation. Suddenly he realized, This is the house of the Lord! Whatever that place is, that tent yonder, that is no longer the house of the Lord! This is it; that is only a location, a convenience; that has served a purpose, not in the direct line of the purpose. That is something, but this is it, this is the house of the Lord!

What is the house of the Lord? The house of the Lord is where sin has been fully judged and the glory of man and of this world has been brought to nought and where God alone, in grace, in mercy, is found. That is the meaning of this threshing-floor. Threshing had been done, an altar had been built, a sacrifice had been made, sin in all its vileness had been seen, recognized, met and judged in an awful judgment, and man who wanted something for himself to glory in — See the great kingdom that I have, the great multitudes that I have, see what strength I have! — the gratification of this flesh, the

glory of this world, the whole thing has been broken and ground to powder in awful judgment — the glory of this world and the glory of this flesh. It is laid in dust, judged and put away. Man is out, God alone is there, supreme, vindicated. That is the house of God.

When Jacob came to Bethel, really to Bethel, eventually to Bethel where he could abide, it was no longer as the usurper of old, the supplanter of old. It was now as the man whose strength had been broken under the touch of God, whose glory had been weakened, who went upon his staff to the end of his days and whose name had been changed from an earthly to a heavenly one. *"Thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel"*, a prince with God (Gen. 35:10), and that is Bethel, the house of God.

It is always like that, for Calvary always precedes Pentecost; the cross always precedes the upper room, the church, the glory. The house of God really has no place for the glory of man, no place for unjudged sin, no place for this world. The house of God is where God in His glory alone is found.

What a lot of history there is lying behind such a truth, such a fact. Again we can understand why it is that Christendom, claiming to be the church, is out of the way; God is outside. It is the sporting ground for flesh, the place in which this world has a large standing. Satan has ever and always sought to veil the glory of God by bringing his stuff in. While it is very costly, God needs a few Nehemiahs, overcomers in the form of Nehemiahs, who will turn the stuff of foreigners out of the house of God. Oh, what a stroke of satanic genius that was to get someone of the world outside installed right in the sanctuary and given a compartment to bring in his stuff. Yes, you can undo the very nature and vocation of the house of God by bringing the stuff in from the outside and it wants a Nehemiah to turn it out and turn out, lock, stock and barrel, those who have no right there. *"God is in His holy temple"* (Hab. 2:20); that is His place.

This has to come home to us and that brings us to the fact that the house of God, initially and continually, is always based upon an altar. The cross is basic to the house of God, basic to our lives if the glory of the Lord is going to be revealed. The measure of the cross will be the measure of the glory; the measure of the glory in our lives and in our meeting together will be the measure in which the cross has done its work in bringing to an end our own natural life, our own natural glory and all that belongs to this world in us. The glory of the Lord will be just in proportion to the work of the cross in us, for the house of God, for His testimony, is always based upon an altar. Wherever it is, you will find it so. *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."* The Holy Spirit has come to constitute a vessel for the testimony of God, the glory of God. The Holy Spirit waits upon the work of the cross and the Holy Spirit will always demand the work of the cross. If the cross leads to the Spirit, the Spirit always points back to the cross.

At Corinth there is that which claims to represent the house of God but there is strength of flesh, worldly interest there, the natural glory. The first chapters of the first letter to the Corinthians show that so clearly, and the apostle, because he is a man in whom the Spirit is burning concerning the testimony of God, the glory of God and the true sanctuary for that testimony, he has to say, *"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"* (1 Cor. 2:2). It is the only thing for you Corinthians: it is no use my coming to say anything else to you; the only thing to be said to you is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That is the only way to change this situation. Christ crucified — the judgment and end of all this that belongs to man by nature, unregenerate, whatever it is. That is the meaning of Christ crucified.

Well, what does it amount to? We are all concerned, I trust, with the glory of God, that God should be glorified in us individually. I am sure that is true. And we are probably also concerned for the glory of God in our assembly life, our corporate life, and in the life

of the church as a whole. If so, that glory can only come in as we go out. The glory demands our exit, I mean the exit of ourselves by nature. I know how familiar that is, but I also know that the older we get and the farther we go on with the Lord, the more we realize how we have been in the Lord's way. Perhaps that ought to be a mark of growing up in the Lord, to recognize just how much we have been getting in the Lord's way, how much the glory has been retarded by us. Our note becomes more and more emphatic as we go on. For the glory of God, we have got to get out of His way.

Let me say, as I close, that that is the key to the awful tragedy of Israel. There has not been very much glory in Israel since the fall of Jerusalem, whatever there was for some long time up to the death of Christ and the following sixty or seventy years. There was not very much then, but there has not been very much since. The glory has been veiled; ah, the glory has departed. Why? What is the explanation? I think that it is summed up in one word by Paul, just one sentence - *"Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God"* (Rom. 10:3), and you can put it all into a part of that last clause — *"did not subject themselves"*. The way of glory is, whatever it means and to whatever it may apply, submitting ourselves. There is no place for the glory if we ourselves, ourselves as ourselves, are there. Submission may be intellectual submission. You never get very far to the glory of God if your intellect is on the throne over against what God has said. It may be the submission of our will. The glory of God will not be there if our wills are dominant. It may be the submission of our desires, our affections. It may be submission on some particular point, to whatever it may apply. There is going to be no glory, no testimony, until we have submitted ourselves, for that is the essence of Calvary — *"Not my will, but thine, be done."* *"Have not submitted themselves"* - that is the key to a very tragic history of the glory departed. I think we will stop there with that solemn warning and exhortation.

Chapter 6 – The People of the Testimony

Reading: Hag. 2:1-5,20-23; Zech. 3:1-4; Hag. 2:13-14; Zech. 4:1-9; Rev. 11:3-4,7; 12:11.

We have seen that out of all these passages there arise a number of quite distinct broad issues and with these we have been occupied. The first and that which governs all else is the divine testimony, the testimony of God, represented or typified by the candlestick all of gold; the testimony of God being the glory of God, the thing which governs everything from eternity to eternity and is the issue of all things in which God is active and interested.

Then the second of these broad issues is the vessel of that testimony represented by the house, the temple, the church, and ultimately the overcomer.

We saw that in the first place that testimony was bound up with man in general, that is, that God created man for His glory and that the very purpose of man was for the testimony of God, the glory of God, but man in the first instance failed. Then the testimony was taken up by a thin line of witnesses. First the antediluvians: Abel, Enoch, Noah. Upon these single links in the chain in their time rested the full responsibility for the testimony of God, the glory of God. Then, in the next series of individuals, the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and David is called a patriarch by Luke in Acts. These were individuals with whom the testimony of God, the glory of God, specially rested in their time.

Then Israel was brought in to be the corporate vessel of that testimony as a nation among nations, a corporate instrument for the glory of God to preserve that testimony in the earth among the nations. Israel eventually failed and the glory departed but was taken up and brought back into the church. And at Pentecost we see the glory returning, and the divine testimony once more coming in in a greater fulness. But then again that testimony in its full pristine glory is lost and even the church, generally speaking, fails. With the book of the Revelation we find the church in general without the testimony in its full beauty and strength, the Lord judging the church because of that. And then the testimony of God's glory is taken up in the overcomer company in the church and that overcomer company is seen to carry the testimony to final triumph in Revelation 12. That is the story of the testimony of God, and what we have just said brings us to the point for our present consideration.

A People Governed By A Particular State of Heart.

We come to the third of these main issues from the Word of God, that is, the people of the house and the testimony. We have remarked already that out of the millions who went into exile, only some forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty came back, so we are told in Ezra. The great mass had settled in, had become very largely a part of the life of Babylon, had found their interests there, had become tied up with things and their life was now in that realm. For them it meant a tremendous work of upheaval and extrication to come back to nothing, to be in the land a poor and afflicted people, to be in a minority, to start all over again, and in this world seemingly to be nothing. So the mass would not pay the price, and only a small remnant returned. The Lord called it a day of small things, but something not to be despised.

When Cyrus made his decree that the house should be built again in Jerusalem and that every facility should be granted to those who went back to build, he did not make it a command that the Jews should go back. Otherwise, whatever it had cost, they would have had to go. But he made it a heart matter. *"Whoso is of a willing heart, whose heart inclined him"*. It was pre-eminently a heart matter and it must always be that. It always has been that, it always will be that, for only so can it correspond to the object in view. The object in view is a vessel for the glory of God, and if you have any personal interests then you are entirely out of keeping with the object in view. The glory of God, the testimony of God, must of necessity be a heart matter. The end is standing in closest and fullest relationship to the executive ministry and administration of God's Kingdom, and you know quite well from all that the Lord has said about the Kingdom that it is a heart matter. Much will come into your hearts as you think of what the Lord Jesus said about the Kingdom, how it was always a heart matter: coming after Me, being My disciple, following Me, being with Me. If the heart is divided, then oneness with Him in His Kingdom is impossible. Unless there is a denying of self, a taking up the cross, a following daily, the Kingdom is not possible. It is the little flock to whom the Kingdom is given, but that little flock is the little flock that follows the Lamb whithersoever He goes, and it is all a heart matter.

I do want again to remind you forcibly of the great end which is in view. *The end* which is in view is this relationship with the Lord of a peculiar kind in an administrative capacity, the executive administration of His Kingdom, not just to be in the Kingdom, but to be with the King in responsibility for the Kingdom, and if that is the great end, that is going to find us out, that is the thing by which our hearts are going to be tested continually. Such a people or vessel will be entirely governed by a particular state of heart.

We have said that it ever has been so. To understand Abel we must see that it was sheer jealousy for the glory of God which prompted his line of conduct. Such a line involved everything for him and he had to pay that price and love not his own life even unto the death. It was a heart matter. We can say the same of Enoch. If Enoch walked with God, we may take it that that in practical meaning meant that Enoch had a heart undividedly for the glory of God in a day when that glory was so terribly hidden by sin and the ways of men and the power of Satan. And it is not difficult to see this in the case of the rest, of Abraham, of David, a man after God's own heart. *"God looks on the heart"* is the word which governed David. *"Man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart"* (1 Sam. 16:7). With these the testimony of God rested in a peculiar way.

And so with prophets. It is clear with Samuel; Samuel was a man whose heart was wholly set upon the glory of God. Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Daniel and the rest — they stand in their day as those with whom the testimony of God's glory is peculiarly invested, and we follow on in the New Testament and we see how true this is with Paul and other apostles and at last with the overcomers. It is all a heart matter.

And is not that the real key to the messages to the churches? Where the Lord has to speak in strong and stern language of rebuke and disappointment, it is not because they were failing to carry on in His work and with many activities in His Name, not because they were not jealous for fundamental truths and doctrines. The trouble was here — there was something wrong with their hearts. Take Ephesus as the key; *"I know thy works"* and then follows a series of things to be commended; *"but I have this against thee, that thou hast left thy first love"* (Rev. 2:4). There is something more than work, something more than patience, something more than zeal for Christian testimony, something deeper. It is that thing that we have to get to now — that something deeper for which the Lord is looking and which is the ultimate thing with Him. It is this heart matter.

Truth in the Inward Parts

David said, *"Thou desirest truth in the inward parts"* (Psa. 51:6). What is that, what does that amount to? There are many dear children of God, multitudes of them, about whose devotion to the Lord in a certain way we may have no question and we have no right to judge. They are devoted to Him along certain lines of activity and have a certain inward relationship with Him of love and sacrifice, but while that is quite true, there is still some place in them where you will find that there is not truth in the inward parts. They are not willing to pay the ultimate price and it amounts really to a matter of utter honesty.

Beloved, it is true that there is a good deal of dishonesty of heart deep down amongst many Christian people. If I can get that clear to you, I have succeeded in indicating what this company is that is to be the ultimate vessel for the glory of God. It is not an easy thing to do but it is an important thing. There are many people, beloved children of God, who are not prepared to lose their reputation amongst Christians, their position in the Christian world, their opportunities of usefulness, as they put it, in Christian service, their open doors of advantage for Christian activity and witness. They are not prepared to risk it for something which, in that realm, lies under a cloud of suspicion and question, and they are not even prepared to investigate directly and personally, to prove for themselves. They have a reservation. They excuse themselves by all manner of means, they excuse what they are doing and what they are unwilling to do with very good excuses. They are keeping on the safe side of the road. What they are not doing is to search out diligently and commit themselves utterly to that which is supremely God's concern. Yes, these other things are the interests of the Lord, but are they supremely God's concern? They are not giving themselves with all honesty of heart to enquire and to search out as to what God's supreme concern is. You will find many Christians — and you must not question that they are the Lord's and you must not question that they are, in a way, devoted to the Lord and to His interests, but you will find them, who will hedge, who will put on blinkers when it comes to something more utter which means some cost, not in the world, but in the realm of Christian circles and relationships and opportunities and activities. They hedge, and that is a lack of downright honesty of heart, for honesty of heart means that you take this position: nothing matters, no cost matters, whatever it is, whatever may be involved, so long as I am right at the very heart and centre of God's supreme concern and for that I am prepared to pay any price, by the grace of God! That is the heart that God is looking for.

Look at it all the way through the Bible. Cain and Abel — both worshipped the same God, both built an altar to the same Lord, both apparently devoted in their worship of the same Lord, but one, in the very nature of his worship, his sacrifice, so utterly without self-interest. All the principles of Abel's sacrifice are the absence of self-interest. This is judgment and death, the utter and ultimate letting go. With Cain there is the gratification of his soul; the offering of the fruit of my hands, the work that I have done, the splendid achievement of my labours! And he brings with his offering the insinuations of self-satisfaction, self-pleasure, self-gratification, even in his service for God. The self-element is there even in his service to God. The letting go utterly unto death is not there and God looked on the heart. God saw in Abel's offering the foreshadowing of the eternal features of the sacrifice which He Himself made of His own Son and of His Son's sacrifice. *"Who, existing in the form of God ... emptied himself"* (Phil. 2:6), let go everything of self-glory, of personal position, let go right unto the death, and from Abel to Rev. 12:11, *"they loved not their life even unto death."* That is the principle, to be for the glory of God if it costs everything, if you lose everything, not only in this world but in your own family, in your own spiritual family. It is true from Abel onward always.

Take the case of David. He stands over against Saul and Saul is there in Scripture as the man who represents the terrible tragedy of a self-interest in the Kingdom of God. If there is one thing about David that is true, it is that there was no self-interest in David in the Kingdom of God. I need not take up case after case. That is what God is looking for and that is going to be the vessel, the testimony, the glory of God eventually.

This will discriminate even among Christians. We must be careful. There is this one thing that we have to recognize, of course without criticism, that there is much that is of God and blessed by Him which does not reach His fullest desire. Let us always bear that in mind and never let us be critical of anything, however small it maybe, which is of God, which He owns and blesses. Let us ask the Lord ever to save us from anything but an attitude of appreciation toward anything that is of God, anything that He has owned, but, at the same time, while that is true, and being free from any mentality of judgment and criticism, let us recognize that even there there is much that will not pay the full price and go right on to God's fullest desire. There is and there must be that which does relate to the ultimate and consummate purpose of God. There is that still and that has got to be dealt with in a peculiar way.

Let me say here at once that this is not a matter of adopting special teaching. You do not become an overcomer by adopting overcomer teaching, nor by adopting a certain position, nor by a special form or practice in Christian procedure. This vessel is constituted by an overpowering sense that God has something more. It has not stopped anywhere on the way. It still has a deep mighty sense of God having something more.

You can see how that does discriminate today. That is not just a legal discrimination between Christians. You know quite well that there is a great mass of Christians who are pretty well satisfied, content. They do not want much more. Their realm, their measure, their line of things fills their bill. They are not characterised by a real quest for something which they are sure is in the thought and purpose of God but which still lies beyond their knowledge. There are those who are marked by that; it is something in them, they may not be able to explain what it is they are after, they may not be able to define the longing of their hearts, but they have it. They are marked by this — not that it is just a discontentment with things but deep down in them they are sure that God has something more than they have yet seen and they must come to that, and that is how such a vessel of testimony, the testimony of God, the glory of God, is constituted — by that thing.

You find that this is true of Christians. I do not want to bring into view those people who are eternally disgruntled and full of criticisms, there are plenty of those people about who criticise everything and anything and can never be contented anywhere at all. Let us leave them out of our consideration, out of account, and ask the Lord that we may never be just that. But, at the same time, there is that company of people in the earth whose hearts are groaning against the small measure that there is, who are inwardly in travail for something more of God. They sense that there is such and their hearts are reaching out for that, for God's fullest and utterest, and it is a very blessed thing to come across those people, to meet them, to be able to say, Here is one who is really on full stretch for God's best; for them nothing matters, tradition does not matter, association does not matter, what people think or say does not matter. They are not a bit governed by what other Christians say, by the attitudes of other Christians towards them. They really are seeking for, and stretching out to, God's best. Yes, God has a people like that in the earth amongst His own people and it is that thing which really does constitute this overcomer company. They are an offset to this general condition in the churches, something wrong with the heart.

I wonder if you have been able to follow more than I have said, been able to see through what I have been saying. It is a difficult thing to say, it looks like criticism, it looks harsh, it looks extreme, but if it is not put to you very well, very clearly, there is in this something very vital. It is the result of a deeper work of God in the heart that produces this candlestick all of gold, and the lot of such is a peculiarly difficult lot, so that the abiding peril or temptation is always to compare their lot with the lot of other Christians; the numerical lot — the other Christians have the crowds, the members; or the experiential lot — the other Christians do not have to go through the same fires, difficulties, intense sufferings, but let it be understood that this candlestick of gold is going to be made such by fires of sevenfold intensity. So the lot of the people of the

house and the testimony is a much more difficult one spiritually than is that of any others.

The fact is — and I am speaking to those who are taking responsibility in the things of the Lord — that we shall not find but one in a great number who will go right on. We must not turn our backs on the rest and cut them off from our Christian interest and appreciation as children of God, but we must recognize the fact that it will be but one in many.

Now the point is this, that while there is all that which is of the Lord and comes under His blessing and must be recognized and acknowledged as being of Him and blessed of Him, the fact is that God has a ministry to these others to bring them into that consummate position, and that ministry is a very necessary thing. It is a thing in itself and a very vital thing. It relates to the ultimate desire of the Lord.

Now we have to look this thing squarely in the face. Is it a fact? If it is, we have to decide whether we are in the matter and we have to decide whether we are going to pay the price, and further we have to keep continually in view what our ministry really is. I am only putting before you the position. You have to know whether in your heart God has been doing that thing. You have to say, This is not something that I myself have raised up, have created, but I know deeper than I know anything else in my spiritual history that God has planted in me something which can never be satisfied with anything less than His fullest. It is something God has done in me. He has apprehended me in that matter and He has dealt with me accordingly and is dealing with me accordingly and as I look at His dealings with me, often as I have revolted and felt the strain and longed for relief and wished that it could be otherwise, I have to confess that His dealings with me are consistent with the thing for which He has called me. That is, I see that an utter consummate thing means a consummate work in those concerned, and God is doing a consummate work, something not ordinary, where I am concerned. He is doing a very deep and thorough work with me; He does not let me off.

The Opposition of the Enemy

And then as to the active side of that, in testimony outwardly. Of course, it is going to make many go away. Of course, it is going to lose a great deal of popularity, it means many closed doors, it means a narrowing sphere in this world, but "*who hath despised the day of small things?*" That is only another way of saying, Don't you despise this that looks so small, it is far greater than those millions back there in its intrinsic worth to God. The greatness of an apparently small thing is the measure of essential satisfaction to the Lord, and not the measure of its recognition by men.

There is so much lying behind what I am saying in the Word. One of my difficulties is to get it concentrated. If you read all the Scripture which lies behind this of which we are speaking — Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, the later chapters of Isaiah, parts of Jeremiah, then Haggai and Zechariah — you will see a mighty confederacy against this thing. In Ezra 4 we are told about the various rulers, Cyrus, Darius, Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes, and it says there that through all these reigns, the enemies of Judah sought to frustrate this thing. Frustration has become a very prominent word in our language. Through all these reigns the enemies of Judah sought to frustrate this thing. There was a mighty, persistent confederacy and conspiracy to frustrate. Then the thing must be important, it must signify something, if these powers set themselves so persistently against it. Oh yes, you know what they said when they wrote their letter advising the king to intervene — If they build this city, if they build this place, you know what it will involve for you, you stand to lose everything if once this thing goes up!

Ah, that is it; get this vessel of testimony and there is immense loss represented to those other powers, to that other kingdom, and surely that stands for something with the Lord.

I wonder if you have been able to follow what I have tried to say with such difficulty. To me it is perfectly clear.

"By My Spirit"

The final word is here. The whole thing is impossible, and the Lord knows it, unless He Himself does it. *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts."* We cannot pay the price and we cannot go through, we cannot fulfil this ministry. It is all impossible except for the Spirit of the Lord, the Lord of hosts. Well, how good it is that that does come in there with the candlestick all of gold and what that means, this house to be built as the vessel for that testimony to God's glory and all the price to be paid, the suffering to be endured. The Lord says that it is impossible by might and power, but it is possible and will be by My Spirit. And that is our hope, our confidence, our assurance — by His Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord of hosts.

I feel we have just to be quiet with this for a little and weigh it up and really ask the Lord to bear home to us its significance, for it is the ultimate thing. There is no doubt about it. I say again, we must seek to be delivered from any spirit of criticism in the direction of anything at all that is of the Lord. At the same time, we must recognize that a very great deal of that stops short and does not go right on to that full and consummate thing that the Lord is after and very largely because the price will not be paid, the cost is too great; and often because there is a lack of downright honesty of heart. It is a terrible thing to say about any Christian, I know, but there is honesty and honesty, and while there may be real sincerity of heart before the Lord, so often there is the lack of that utter honesty which will tear off all blinkers, which will refuse all hedging and which will say, Though it costs everything, no matter what other people say or think, no matter what it means to me, I am going to find out for myself before God what He is really after and not take the present standard, even of the best I know, as necessarily being the final standard of God. Such utterance is something for which the Lord is really looking and which does very much relate to the thing which He has as His end.

Chapter 7 – The Two Features and Functions of the Vessel of Testimony

Reading: Zech. 3:1-5; Hag. 2:13-14; Rev. 1:5-6; 5:10; 20:6.

Now we come, in the course of our meditations, to the fourth of the great issues which arise from the Word of God. The first and all-governing is the divine testimony, which is the glory of God. The second, the vessel of that testimony; firstly, man as originally intended; then, after his failure, a chain of individuals; then Israel; then the church; then, inasmuch as all these have failed in the final full sense, the testimony is consummated in the overcomer, the vessel of the glory of God. In our previous meditation, we were occupied with the third, the people of the testimony.

Now we go on to number four: the two features and functions of the people of the testimony, the double anointing. In Zechariah 4 we have the candlestick all of gold, typifying this testimony of God, the glory of God. And we have around it, the house, the vessel of testimony. Then concerned with it, forty-two thousand, three hundred and sixty out of the millions of the Lord's people which went into exile, a small company, came back, letting go everything for the Lord's interests — a people of the testimony of God.

Priesthood and Government

Now we have to consider these two representative men, Joshua the high priest, and Zerubbabel the governor, who speak in figure of the two functions of the people of the testimony. That is, priestliness and princeliness. Priesthood and government are two things which are ever coupled together in the Word of God. A Moses and an Aaron, a governor and a priest. And of course, all that is contained in that connection is gathered up in the Lord Jesus. Then we come on to those words which we read in Revelation — "*made us a kingdom and priests*", two things always found together as the outworking of the anointing. We have to see something of what this means as to the people of the testimony of the glory of God, or, in other words, how these things relate to that supreme consequence, the glory of God. It is a far bigger matter than we shall be able to compass but indications can be given and one or two things of immediate consequence and value can be said.

We see quite clearly that all this about priesthood and kingliness is intended by the Spirit of God to point to the Lord Jesus. That is not a difficult thing for anyone to see or to accept, that He does answer to these things as He answers to all other things in the Scriptures.

But then, to follow that, we see that we receive these things. I say 'we': I mean those who are the vessel of this testimony of God, they receive these things from Christ or are constituted by Christ according to these principles. They are made priests and kings unto our God and Father; and then follows "*to him be the glory*". You see, it is all unto the testimony of God, the glory of God. Just as we have seen in the matter of the vessel of the testimony, the church, it comes out in the great words of the apostle — "*Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the ages of the ages*" (Eph. 3:21), glory in *the church* unto all ages for ever and ever. The church is an eternal thing for the glory of God, so the priesthood and the kingship of believers is related to the testimony of God, the glory of God.

The Nature and Meaning of the Priesthood

But we want to understand, in the first place, something of the nature and meaning of this priesthood. I am going to say some things which may startle you, I mean they may make you think hard and pause a bit before you accept them, but I am quite sure you will give them very sympathetic and open-hearted consideration in the light of the full

truth. We have not yet fully or sufficiently grasped the distinction between the priesthood of Aaron and the priesthood of Melchizedek. It is in that distinction that we find the truth and full meaning of priesthood.

The priesthood of Christ transcends the priesthood of Aaron. What was the priesthood of Aaron? It was a necessary parenthesis. It came in because of a necessity which had arisen, and was therefore of a special kind, to meet, shall we say, an emergency. But we are told in the Word that the priesthood of Melchizedek is something which swallows up the priesthood of Aaron, goes beyond it, both backwards and forwards, is before it and after it. It is as though there was a priesthood — and there was — before ever the Aaronic priesthood came into being; then in brackets as a parenthesis, the priesthood of Aaron, and then that completed and this other priesthood going on again, the greater priesthood than that of Aaron.

The feature of the Aaronic priesthood was its expiatory nature, expiation for sin. The other priesthood is not that; the other priesthood is outside of the sin question altogether. Melchizedek sacrifices are not blood sacrifices at all. So the priesthood of Christ — for He is a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek — the priesthood of Christ transcends that of Aaron while it includes it. It embodies it, yet it swallows it up, and His priesthood, while it is expiatory, is not only expiatory, it is something more than that. It has to do with an endless life. Aaron's priesthood sees something coming in to interfere with the endless life and deals with that something and gets it out of the way. The priesthood of Melchizedek holds that endless life and is after the power of an endless life (Heb. 7:16), and transcends the priesthood, the sacrifice, which has to do with an interference with that endless life. "*Made like unto the Son of God*" (Heb. 7:3) "*after the power of an endless life*", and that is not something which just comes in in time to meet an emergency.

One of the things that I am going to say which I said may startle you, is this, that the priesthood of the Lord Jesus is not primarily redemptive. Now that wants thinking about, because we have always thought that His priestly work had to do supremely with redemption. All our ideas, our mentality, about His priestly work in offering Himself, in the shedding of His Blood, the altar of His cross, it all conclusively and exclusively had to do with redemption. I say again, the priesthood of the Lord Jesus has not primarily to do with redemption. It has to do with redemption, but not primarily.

You are wondering why I am saying this. Well it is, in order to get at the very thing with which we are concerned in these days, and the very thing which I trust we are seeing is the supreme concern of God. The priesthood of the Lord Jesus undoubtedly has to do with redemption, but again redemption is a parenthesis, redemption is an emergency measure, redemption is because something has come in and has to be dealt with and got out of the way in order that that which was and is to be may be perfected, may be realized.

The Supreme Purpose of Priesthood

What then, is the primary and supreme feature and nature and purpose of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, if it is not redemption? It is the glory of God. You remember familiar words: "*Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I am come (In the roll of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God*" (Heb. 10:5-7).

Sacrifice and offering and whole burnt offering for sin Thou hast no pleasure in. That is a dark chapter in the history of this universe. God looks upon that with sorrow, grief, with a shadow over His face. That phase of things must be: but I have no pleasure in that! What is My pleasure? In what is My pleasure? My pleasure is when I have men wholly devoted to My will, when I have an offering which is not only and just a matter of putting

wrong right, but positively and altogether right without any wrong in it at all, where the dark sin question does not arise, but where I can say, in him is my delight!

The Lord Jesus, in the days of His flesh, fulfilled in spirit a priesthood which was not the priesthood of Aaron and in the dark hour of the cross He fulfilled the Aaronic priesthood and everything was dark then. But while He was walking on the line of Melchizedek during the thirty-three years and a little more, He was doing the will of His Father and the Father was able to say, In Him is My delight! He had a man who was wholly unto Himself, an instant sacrifice to God's pleasure without the sin question coming up at all. There is no dark moment because of sin in those thirty-three years, and it was priestly. He was offering Himself, He was offering the sacrifice of Himself, doing the Father's will, and the Father's pleasure was perfect in Him. In the hour of the cross when He was made sin, the sin question came in, and the Father had to turn His face away — no pleasure, no delight, from that side, the sin side. It was a necessary thing; yes, God accepted the sacrifice, but it is dealing with something else. It is a dark phase of things, an awful phase of things, but that finished, that Aaronic parenthesis was completed. The other is resumed and taken up in even greater fulness and the power of an endless life. The glory of God comes upon Him; He has done the will of God. Yes, He did it in the cross, but He had been doing it every day of His life. *"I do always the things that are pleasing to him"* (John 8:29). *"I am come to do thy will, O God."*

Do you see the distinction between these priesthoods and see the greater? That is the force of Hebrews 7: the *greater* priesthood of Melchizedek. *"Consider how great this man was"*; the greater than Abraham, and what is the greater? The greater is that which directly and immediately relates, not to the dark chapter of man's sin, important and necessary as that is, but immediately and directly relates to the glory of God.

The priesthood that we have received is not an Aaronic priesthood. When He makes us priests and kings unto His God and Father, He does not make us Aaronic priests. You and I cannot fulfil the Aaronic priesthood, it is all fulfilled.

We stand in the value and virtue of it. We draw from it all its good, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, all the values of the Blood. Yes, we take all that up, but we have come on to other ground. There is no need for us to offer those blood sacrifices again; that is once and for all accomplished.

We are in Romans 12:1-2 — *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service"* (spiritual worship).

That is not a blood sacrifice. You are alive from the dead, you are risen in Christ. Now your priesthood is to offer yourself to the glory of God. Another way in which Romans 12:1-2 could be put is, Now then, having derived all the values of Christ's mediatorial work according to the Aaronic priesthood and sacrifice, now come on to this other ground where, alive in Christ, you are abandoned wholly for the glory of God; present your bodies a living sacrifice. *"Be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

My point is this, that priesthood, while it in Christ touches vitally the matter of redemption, pre-eminently and supremely has to do with the glory of God, the testimony of God. So you see that that feature always comes in with priesthood, it is always associated with priesthood. When the priests are in the condition in which they ought to be and functioning as they should function, the glory of God is there in the house, in the temple. It has to do with glory.

What is the practical meaning and value of this right here and now? Well, priesthood is firstly unto God and priesthood was there before ever man sinned. Before sin entered, before it was necessary for another form of priestly activity to come in and offer blood sacrifices for expiation, atonement, propitiation, priesthood was there in principle. Adam, in his very being, his very nature and constitution, was a priest, a priest in this way, that he was made for the glory of God and was to hold everything for the glory of God, to seek to bring back everything for the divine satisfaction. He stood there in the earth in order that God might have His satisfaction, and that is the very essence of priesthood.

Priesthood and Dominion Dependent on Organic Oneness

Now do you notice that that responsibility and that royalty, that dominion which was given to Adam was given to him in an organic sense. I am going now at once to step over to this other feature and function of dominion and bring them both in together. This priestliness and this dominion vested in Adam at the beginning as God's representative here was vested in him in a corporate and organic way. What do we mean by that? Well, let us read Gen. 1:28 – "*And God blessed them*" (not him): "*and God said unto them ... have dominion ... And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb*". This dominion is on an organic basis, that is on the ground of being fruitful, multiplying, replenishing, subduing. It is not individualistic, it is corporate, that is the whole race was crowned in that first pair. It is organic. The perfect, organic oneness of the race is essential to the dominion and the glory of God. The dominion, the lordship, the priesthood which brings everything to the glory of God is dependent upon the absolute organic oneness of the race. And priesthood and dominion mean the holding of that divine idea of organic oneness for the glory of God.

Perhaps I can help you to grasp that better when I jump straight away from Gen. 1:28 to the Gospel. We call John 17 the High Priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus, and it is. He stands there as high priest, but He also stands there in the place of the crowned One, the Lord, the Son. "*Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*" (v.5). What is this that we find in John 17? We find priesthood functioning, and it is functioning now along the line of intercession, one of the functions of priesthood. And what is the burden of that priestly functioning? "*That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*" (v.21). You see, priesthood and dominion hold the organic oneness of things for the glory of God, and priesthood and dominion are constituted upon that basis of organic oneness.

Satan's Efforts to Divide

Now I am saying a difficult thing, but I am most anxious to get it through to you. Why has Satan ever and always sought to destroy the organic oneness of that which is of God? In order to get the dominion and the priesthood into his own hands, that is, to take the glory and the power to himself. Oh, what a lot of history lies behind that!

Now here is a vessel for the testimony of God, the glory of God, nothing less than that, the glory of God by priestly dominion. If that vessel is to function effectively and triumphantly, that vessel has to stand for, demonstrate and the absolute organic oneness of that which is of God. And any vessel which has been brought in for that purpose — the glory of God through organic oneness — will be ever and always the object of Satan's most intense endeavours and efforts to split it up, to destroy its organic oneness. Oh yes, there are many tragedies now coming into view. Behind everything in the deepest and most solemn and tremendous way, organic oneness is essential to the glory of God.

That is the essential meaning of the Body of Christ. The Body is one; it is the oneness that is particularly emphasized by the Body idea of the people of God. The Body is one, but has many members. "*Many members, but one body*" (1 Cor. 12:20). That is the

vessel for the testimony of the glory of God. "*Unto him be the glory in the church*" (Eph. 3:21).

Now, to rob that vessel of its power with God, to rob that vessel of its dominion, to rob that vessel of its very divine purpose and intention, the glory of God, Satan concentrates to divide. The whole terrible story of schism and division amongst the Lord's people is the story of Satan's persistent blows at the testimony of God, the glory of God. There is nothing more dishonouring to God, more veiling of His glory, than the divisions amongst the Lord's people.

Now we say we are devoted to the glory of God. That is very practical, that is very immediate. It comes right home at once to the question of division between two believers, not the great sectarian divisions, but just divisions between two believers, spiritual schism in our hearts. Then the glory of God is touched, it is a work of the devil, and our priesthood is smitten and our dominion is destroyed. What is true from the most limited measure of "*two of you agreeing*", synchronizing, is to become true of the whole of that Body and vessel for the testimony of God. The overthrow of Satan will be by the priesthood of the church and that priesthood means the custodianship of the testimony of God, His glory, and for that testimony everything personal has got to go.

"*They loved not their lives even unto death*" (Rev. 12:11). That testimony and that kind of spirit has got to come into our personal relationships as the Lord's people. You know, beloved, if that really came upon us as something more than words, more than doctrine, if it fell upon us with the power of the Holy Spirit conviction, we would be going round putting it right with everybody amongst the Lord's people with whom we are wrong. I heard Dr. Meyer say that at a certain conference the Spirit of God was so strongly felt in conviction along the line of believers putting wrongs right in order to give the Lord a full way in their lives for His glory, that immediately after that meeting the local Post Office was so besieged with people buying postal orders to meet their debts that they could not meet the demand. It is very practical; that is how it will work out. It will work out in an instant seeking to put right those things which we see now are not just human grievances, misunderstandings, but works out from hell against the testimony of God, the glory of God. Oh, if you get a company of people like that, with that conception, that conviction, that spirit, that heart, you have a priestly company, and you have something which does delight the heart of God and it can be said, "*There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore*" (Psa. 133:3). You see brethren dwelling together in unity like the precious oil, and there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. That is all priestly; it is the Aaronic oil dealing with divisions and making for oneness, dwelling together, and the Lord blesses, and it issues in life for evermore. That is priesthood.

I do not want to spoil it by adding much more. There is a lot more, but I do want you to get the central thing. Oh, that we could say this to all the Lord's people; if only it could be said to all the Lord's people but said by someone who was able to say it under such a mighty anointing that it would come home with the necessary conviction.

Do you see what God is after? Do you see what we are talking about? It is not teaching, not abstract ideas. What is before us at this time in this Conference, by the Lord's ordering I believe, is that He is really in the midst of His people seeking a people to be to Him the testimony of His glory. Whereas the main body have failed Him again, there is an overcomer body to be found in the midst of the main body who will form for Him that upon which His heart has ever been set from eternity, a vessel for His glory in the fullest sense. He is after that, and that will be a priestly thing which in its supreme value will bring satisfaction to Him, be something offered to Him for His delight, in which He has His delight.

And then it will be a mighty thing, a mighty spiritual power, having dominion. Satan will meet the registration of the impact of the glory of God there, and that is not so general as our mentality might imagine. You see, it does just work like that that, when you have really got down to one of these things which Satan has done to take from the glory of God and dealt with it — not as just some personal grievance, not as some mere human misunderstanding, but you have seen it as touching the glory of God and because your heart is concerned for the glory of God, you have dealt with it and cleared it up together. Then Satan is thrown back, has met an awful rebuff. You are in a place of power and he is in a place of weakness. Satan will maintain that dislocation as long as he can because it takes from God's glory and it brings you into weakness and defeat. Every division between the Lord's people, whether it be between two or between companies, represents weakness in the realm of dealing with Satan. Organic oneness is essential to victory over Satan. It is the *church* that is going to do it and Satan holds the ground so long as he can keep the Lord's people apart, broken up.

I wanted to say something about that intercession for the organic oneness to be expressed, maintained; not made, but preserved as a testimony, but I have not time to say any more. The prayer of the Lord Jesus as High Priest was along that line, and if we are going to receive priesthood from Him, we are going to be tremendously concerned about the organic oneness of the Lord's people. Oh, do not talk about being concerned for the testimony if you are at loggerheads with some other child of God, that is nonsense. Your concern does not hold water, does not carry any weight at all. If you are out of fellowship with another child of God and it is in your power at all to do anything to put that right and you are not doing all that is in your power, your professing to stand for the Lord's testimony is nonsense. The Lord's testimony is not a system of truth, a form of doctrine, ideas. It is right here in personal relationships and all sorts of practical matters. Anything and everything that bears upon the glory of God is the testimony of God.

Well, I think that is enough to get on with. The Lord give us grace and bring this home to us and still enlighten our hearts as to what priesthood and kingship really mean. This is only a mere fragment of it, but it is a fragment sufficient to keep us occupied and put us on the right road.

Chapter 8 – The Adversary of the Testimony

Reading: Zech. 3:1-5; Rev. 12:10.

In the great issues with which we have been occupied in these chapters, there yet remain two we have not specifically dealt with although they have been insinuating themselves into all of our meditations. But now, in a very brief way, we shall seek grace to touch upon them more particularly. They are: the adversary of the testimony, and the all-sufficiency of the Spirit of God. You will at once recognize how impossible it is to speak in any fulness on either of those matters, but again there are points which, although very familiar, do come up and demand our very special careful attention when we are dealing with so great a matter as the testimony of God, that is, the glory of God.

When we commenced and set that matter of the testimony of God at the head of these meditations, we said that the issue of all that in which God is interested and that which He does is His glory. That is the thing which comes out of all the activities of God. Everything that He does works out to His glory, and that is why He does it, for everything from God's side has its existence for that one purpose of bringing glory to Him. But we immediately went on to say that everything in which Satan is interested and which proceeds from him is intended to work out for the veiling of the divine glory and the marring of it, and so we find here in these prophecies of Zechariah the testimony in the representation of the golden candlestick, the testimony of God, in view, and alongside an activity of Satan, the adversary, activity set against the testimony, against the house as the vessel of the testimony, and against the people of the testimony, and we find Satan here in the place of power and authority. He is at Joshua's right hand to be his adversary.

The Ground of the Defeat of the Adversary

If we ask how he got into the place of authority, the place of power, the answer is found in the condition of Joshua. "*Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments.*" As we have seen, Joshua's condition is symbolic of the condition of the whole nation. Hag. 2:13-14 makes it perfectly clear — "*so is this nation before me, saith the Lord ... unclean*". The nation, the people, therefore, are in a position of being for the moment unable to stand up to the adversary because of their state, their spiritual uncleanness, and in order that Satan's rebuke might become an effectual thing, an actual thing, something has got to be done. Joshua's filthy garments have got to be taken away and other garments put in their place.

That, of course, is all very simple, very elementary, but we are thinking about the glory of God. The glory of God is the complete satisfaction of God, God's perfect pleasure. The glory is where God is satisfied, where He is well-pleased, where everything answers to His mind. Given that condition, God's testimony is present in fulness.

Now we know by the very simplest interpretation of Scripture that these garments, the garments of the priest, the garments of the saints, represent their spiritual condition, either in righteousness or unrighteousness. The garments of fine linen are the garments of righteousness; the filthy garments are the garments of unrighteousness, and "*all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*" (Isa. 64:6). Given that condition, Satan is in the place of power and has the right of accusing, the glory of God is veiled, there is no glory. Therefore we must, for the glory of God and the undoing of Satan and for complete ascendancy over him, come to the place where God is perfectly satisfied, where His delight is, and be in that position. And we all know, as the very first lesson of our faith, that that provision has been made by God Himself in a righteousness which is of God through faith (Rom. 3:22). But as much as we know it — and we think we know that, if we know anything about the Christian faith, we know all about justification by faith, we

know all about righteousness by faith, we know all that we can be told about His righteousness for us — yet I venture to say that it is upon that very ground that the battle goes on to the end of our days, and that matter is always coming up anew in some form or another. Somehow it is true that these hearts of ours never utterly let go to the righteousness of God by faith. They are so desperately sick that they are unto the end in some form or another seeking to establish their own righteousness, very often under a cover of feigned humility and deep brokenness, they are still hunting round somewhere in the dark corners and recesses for something upon which they can lay hold of assurance, of confidence, as being good. All the depressions and the discouragements and the weaknesses of an inferiority complex are only one form of trying to find something good to establish our own case, to be able in ourselves to stand up to things. In a thousand ways this thing is there in our hearts and it usually takes a long time for God to get a man or a woman to the place where on that matter Satan is in an absolutely hopeless and paralysed position. *"The prince of this world cometh"* and hath nothing on that score, and that is the position to which God is seeking to bring a people. For if this man child of Revelation 12 is a people, a corporate company — and I do not see how you can interpret it otherwise — *"and they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb"* which at last renders Satan's power absolutely exhausted and finished, and a great voice in heaven is heard saying, *"Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night"*, if that company exhaust the power of Satan, that company is clearly and evidently a company of those who have come to the position where no longer are they on the one hand seeking to establish a righteousness of their own, but on the other hand have settled it once and for all that there is no hope along that line, but there is a righteousness which satisfies God absolutely, in which He finds His perfect pleasure and that is theirs and it is settled once and for all and God is glorified and Satan is ousted.

That is the issue towards which God is working. He is working that in you and me, He is seeking to work it in a company in a great final triumph, for the final triumph is just that. It is not some objective, outward, mechanical casting out of Satan bringing him down from his exalted place. It is the triumph of faith in this righteousness which is not ours, but which is God's own provision, heaven's own provision as something which perfectly satisfies God, and the glory of God is there.

Now, the measure of the glory of God in our lives, the measure of the divine testimony in our lives, is the measure in which that matter has been settled. The measure in which the glory of God is veiled, is hidden, in us and He is not glorified before men, is the measure in which we have uncertainties and questions on this very point. The measure in which Satan is drawing the values from our lives and holding the power is the measure in which we are giving him the ground that he must ever have and which he ever seeks, the ground of a quest for righteousness somewhere other than in Christ, or a failure to apprehend this righteousness which is ours from God by faith. Oh, what bondage we can be brought into, what defeat, oh, what glory goes to the enemy and is taken from God on this point, and I say this battle never ceases.

But there has got to be the progressive weakening of Satan in this matter, there has got to be a coming more and more to the point of finality over this where the enemy knows it is no use getting on that line. If he is going to get us, he has got to try some other line, that one is a closed line to him. He will never get that Christian along the line of unrighteous condemnation, that Christian is far too strongly settled on the matter of his righteousness in Christ.

I ask you is it not true that there lies behind most of our spiritual worries this very issue of being well-pleasing unto Him? You say, Yes, but there is so much about us that is not well-pleasing to Him, and there is so much in us that gives Satan ground! And so arguing, you seem to cut the ground from under this whole thing. Now may I say that it

is the line of approach to this matter which is important. You never can defeat the enemy on this score by seeking first of all to get into a better position yourself and be a better person yourself. That is only doing the very thing that you are not to do. If I can make myself better, if I can get into a better position, then Satan will lose power! All right, try it! — and you struggle and struggle and it will never happen. How then are you to get to a better position? By first of all getting him out of the way. And how are you going to get him out of the way? You have got to get behind the condition to him, and Satan is got out of the way when you take God's position about yourself and not your own about yourself.

I mean this - if only you will take this position, *In Christ* by faith I can never, never, though I live for eternity on earth or in heaven, I can never be more perfect than I am now! Yes, perfection is settled and finished already in Christ and when I am in Christ I am perfect, and who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Christ Who died? (Rom. 8:33,34). The whole question of my perfection was settled in the day that I was found in Christ.

Now then, that does not rule out the necessity for a progressive work of sanctification, but the progressive work of sanctification goes on from perfection, not unto perfection. You understand what I mean by that. You start at the end. Man came on to this earth when God had finished all His other works and, entering into the perfected works of God, became the inheritor of God's perfect works, and that is always the law. We come into the new creation at the point at which God finishes the new creation. We are working from a perfect position. God is only making good what is already true and until we have got a firm hold of the fact that it is already true, we are giving ground to the enemy.

Now the Lord takes us in hand and begins to discipline, chasten, because there is a lot to be done, there is a lot there to be changed but He does it, and then when the Lord begins to do it and we are in the fires of trial and we are beginning to feel conscious of how much there is to be done and how poor a thing we are, immediately the enemy comes in as the accuser and says, You see, this is because you are so bad, this is because you are so evil, so wicked, that the Lord has to deal with you in this way! And we begin to listen to him and take it on and it is not long before what God meant for our perfecting is twisted by the devil for our undoing, whereas our attitude should be, Look here, Satan, in Christ before God I am faultless, I am without spot; what God is doing just now is only to make that good in me, to make that actual in me: hands off! There is nothing here; the precious Blood of Jesus Christ cleanses, keeps on cleansing, from all sin (1 John 1:7). The attitude toward the enemy, the accuser, is a very necessary thing in this whole battle, the point from which you start.

Do you believe, beloved, that if you have walked in the light, if you have been obedient to the truth that God has given you, if your heart has been wholly towards the Lord, and then suddenly in the midst of your days or before you are threescore years and ten you are taken away, do you believe that you are awake in His likeness? Oh, but then there was so much more to be done in me! Yes, but if you had stayed here for a few millenniums, it would have been the same. God has taken responsibility for that. If He takes you away, He has taken full responsibility for your perfecting. The point is this, at any moment, though you were only just saved, five minutes, in Christ at any moment if the Lord takes you away, your perfection is secured, and you cannot do anything to add to that yourself. Your stay here is only that God should work in you that which is true in His Son and when God deals with us, it is no suggestion whatever that we are under condemnation.

The Ground on Which God is Glorified

What I am after is not the doctrine of justification by faith; it is the glory of God. A lot of the glory is out of our faces, a lot of glory is out of our tone of voice; we are perfect

miseries amongst men often. The weight because of this thing is there all the time; we are lying under some kind of accusation, the enemy has got us in his grip on this very question. And the happy people, the people with the glory in their lives even under trial and in suffering and weakness, the people who nevertheless have that about them which glorifies God and you have to say though they have a hard time that the grace of God is there, there is something that is to the glory of God, those people are the people who have this thing settled against the devil. They have completely taken this whole matter right out of his hands, they have known that in Adam they wore the filthy garments, but in the cross those garments were stripped off, in Christ risen they have the new white raiment, fine linen, the righteousness of God by faith, they have changed clothes before God. You will have to forgive this so simple word, but I know this battle and you know it, and it is constantly cropping up and the devil has some very nice angelic instruments. He transforms himself into an angel of light and comes along through Christians picking out your flaws, all the time on a negative line of what is wrong, always seeking to point out the wrong things in everything. Nice Christians, nice brothers, nice sisters, but it is a negative line — what is wrong, what you ought not to do, what you ought to do, this finesse of legalism, instead of encouraging and helping our faith. The positive way really to get people free from the imperfections which you may see will not be to constantly strum on the string of their imperfection but to encourage in the Lord, to be positive in constructive helpfulness. That is the best way, and Satan who is always out to veil the glory of the Lord will take up anything that he can get hold of to bring in the negative note, the accusing note, the judging note. You will find these people even in the presence of so much that is of the Lord. They always just get the thing which is the imperfection and they bring it up to eclipse all the rest, and it is death. It is Satan transforming himself into an angel of light and seeking to preach righteousness, but not the righteousness which is of God by faith, it is this legalistic righteousness. Well, beware of the angel of light.

I do not want to suggest that you are always occupied with the devil and what he is trying to do, but do realize that the testimony of God is based upon this righteousness which is ours in perfection. His priests shall be clothed with righteousness. No priest can truly be that priest who makes the enemy, the adversary, a defeated foe — and that is a function of the priest — until this whole matter is settled.

Victory in the Realm of the Spirit

Well, there is a very great deal more to be said about the overthrow of the enemy, but you notice that the casting down of the accuser is because of the word of their testimony. Now here is an interesting thing. I do not say that it relates to the same people. In Revelation 11 you have the two witnesses, called the two sons of oil, and they give their witness and then the beast rises and makes war and overcomes and kills them and their dead bodies lie in the streets three and a half days, then they rise up. The enemy has triumphed apparently, they are overcome. It says that when they have finished their testimony, the beast rises up and makes war and overcomes them. In Ch. 12 we read *"and they overcame him by the word of their testimony"*. They finished their testimony and he overcame them, and these finished their testimony and overcame him. The point is a spiritual one. I say I am not interpreting this as relating to the same thing, but there is a spiritual point. Those witnesses were not overcome by the devil at all, only their bodies were overcome. The overcoming by the devil was purely in the temporal realm of things. This company, the man child of chapter 12, overcomes the dragon, the adversary, the devil, by the word of their testimony. He is cast down. This is spiritual. Why? *"And they loved not their lives even unto death"*. Very probably both witnesses and the man child company have been killed by the enemy, they loved not their lives even unto death, and they have died, and yet they have overcome. He is beaten, he is cast down.

Do you see the point? Oh yes, the enemy may do a lot against us in the temporal realm, in the physical realm. He may be able to go so far as to kill our bodies, but what is that? In the very doing of it, he may be overcome. However far the enemy may go in the realm of our temporal affairs, touching body, estate, things, touching us in this world, this life and bringing all under his power to crush it and break it and seem to triumph, in the midst of it he is overcome, can be overcome and cast out spiritually. The victory is in the realm of the spirit, not necessarily in the temporal realm at all. They overcame him even though they loved not their lives unto death. They died, perhaps under his persecution, but they overcame. Victory is in the spirit, and oh, what I crave for myself and I crave for you is that, with all the pressure that the enemy brings upon us, the crushing weight, the messengers of Satan to buffet, the thorns in the flesh and all the trials of our circumstances on the outward side, in our spirit Satan will be overcome, he will be cast down, no more place found for him because of our spirit. O Lord, give me in my spirit to be strengthened with might in the inward man that whatever the outward may be under the pressure of Satan, he is all the time defeated in the realm that matters most, he is losing power there! Do not listen to this as something said. This is our battle today.

The All-Sufficiency of the Spirit of God

That leads me to the other word which can be said most briefly. Here are two olive trees emptying their oil through the golden pipes into the bowls of the candlestick. It is an organic provision. These are not cisterns, reservoirs; these are living organisms. That is, there is a continuous and inexhaustible supply of the spirit of life by the Holy Spirit for this testimony in our spirit; the all-sufficiency of the Holy Spirit. *"Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). Unto this the Holy Spirit is all-sufficient. That is all I need say on this matter. *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit."* What by My Spirit? Well, all that we have been saying; the securing and preserving and maintaining of the testimony of God, the glory of God, in this world, the securing of a vessel for that testimony which corresponds to the testimony, the people of the testimony, the company to be found and secured. How shall it be, seeing how things are generally with the people of God, to find and have a people like this, in the midst, real overcomers? This meeting of the adversary of the testimony and of the vessel of the testimony, the glory of God, how shall it all be? The answer comprehensively covering all this ground is: *"This is the word of Jehovah, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."* That is sufficient.

So Paul prays that "He would grant you ... to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inward man" (Eph. 3:16), and again *"that He would grant you to be strengthened with might according to his glorious power unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness"* (Col. 1:11). His Spirit in the inward man the all-sufficient, the inexhaustible fulness of the Spirit is for what? That we should do a lot of mighty things, gain great influence and prominence, come very much into view as much-used servants of God, any of that? No, not at all; for the glory of God. If you and I are set upon the glory of God with an utter selflessness, we have provided the Holy Spirit with the ground that He wants to see that the issue of our lives, whatever it is not, is to the glory of God. May it be so.

Chapter 9 – The New Man

A Parenthesis

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26).

“God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, has at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son ... who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:1-3).

“For not unto angels did he subject the world to come, whereof we speak. But one hath somewhere testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet ... But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour” (Heb. 2:5-9).

“A line shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem” (Zech. 1:16).

“And I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof” (Zech. 2:1-2).

“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein” (Rev. 11:1).

“But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ ... till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:7,13)

This word is somewhat in the nature of a parenthesis in the series, and therefore I need not take time to retrace our steps over the ground already covered, nor to prospect what lies ahead.

The Central Object of God’s Activities

This word will be of a very simple character, and yet it sets before us the central object of all God’s interests and of His activities. I feel the value and importance of it will be in what you see rather than in what I am able to say, for I am very conscious of the difficulty of setting this matter forth in words, of drawing this picture so that you see it, and you must prayerfully seek all the time to see through the thing said. I am sure if we could see what is here it would be quite revolutionary in our lives in every way.

When we have surveyed all the ground of Holy Writ with its numerous phases and aspects and its apparently numerous themes and subjects and truths, what does it all amount to in the main? Is there one thing in it in which it can all be gathered up? After all, is it one thing and not a thousand things, but, so far as God’s main concern goes, is it but one thing? Yes, it is true that God is doing more than one thing and in the end there will be a number of things accomplished, but right at the heart of every divine activity there will be one thing. It will be the hub of all else and out from it everything will move, one central, inclusive, supreme thing which God has had in mind from eternity and toward which He has ever been moving and is still moving. What is that thing? The answer is very simple. It is a man; not firstly a system of things, not an organization, not

any one of a great number of things in which men and even Christians are interested. It is a thing which lies beyond and through many forms of divine activity, but one thing is always the object. God is after a man, He seeks for a man, and when God's end is reached, it will be a man, a corporate man, a collective man at the heart of things, from which all else derives its values. That man is Christ as Head and the church as Body and members, not two separate entities and not in any way distinguishable, but identical - a man, a kind and type of being, a new creation.

If we could really resolve everything into that, it would make everything very much more positive. We are concerned with a great many things for the Lord. We can catalogue those things: movements, projects, organizations, lots of things for the Lord, but it is of some great importance that we see beyond the thing to what God is after. For God is not interested in, neither does He commit Himself to, anything for Him which does not attain that one end. And we are likely to reach the divine end and therefore have God more fully committed to us if we have that end consciously and intelligently in view all the time.

For instance, you can look at the New Testament, the book of the Acts, for instance, and you can see there the apostles given very earnestly and zealously to moving out for the evangelization of the world and the constituting of churches all over that evangelized world. And you can say, Now, this is the thing that is being done for God, it is evangelizing the world and setting up churches everywhere. Therefore the thing to do according to the New Testament is to evangelize the world and bring into being local churches wherever you come! That is one way of looking at it, but that is the short view, quite right as far as it goes, but if that were all, it really would not get very far so far as what God is after is concerned.

What is the meaning of this evangelization and of these churches? What does God mean by this? It means to have Christ, the corporate man, filling all things; it is the bringing in of Christ in a corporate way into this world and He is coming here and here and here. And these churches, which are not organized bodies of a system, not ecclesiastical matters at all but vital parts of an organic body, are intended to be in themselves a living presentation of the one Christ. And God, in planting them, is planting His Son, and what He is doing in chastening, disciplining and putting them through the fires of trial is that there might be more of His Son, more of this man, this heavenly man.

There are two ways of looking at it, and unfortunately so many Christians have become occupied with the ways and the means as an end, wholly taken up with the things and not seeing sufficiently the end that God has in view. It is all a matter of the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That is the end - "*Till we all attain ...*" — that is the goal: the stature of the fulness of Christ, or the full stature of Christ.

So God is not after things. If the mind does not grasp this, if the heart does not really become affected with this, everything becomes so objective and can be so unrelated to our own inner spiritual being. You can become an evangelist, an earnest Christian worker, and in yourself not be spiritually growing at all. And there may be a very great deal that needs to be done in you while you are trying to do an enormous amount for the Lord, and that is never done because it is the *thing* that you are in. That may be extended over a very great deal of ground that things of the Lord become objective and out of relation to our own inner life, and that is the tragedy of so many Christians, so many servants of the Lord, so many workers. They are in the work and they say the great business is soul-winning, winning people for Christ, leading people to Christ, and it is a *thing* for many of them. And they are in the thing and they themselves are not growing, are not being conformed to the image of God's Son. There is a gap between the two, and that is not what God is after at all.

May that not be why God is very slow in coming in on all the appeals to Him to do a big thing in revival, in evangelisation, because so often the thing is unrelated to the spiritual state of the church itself? You find the necessity arises for God to do something in the instrument, the church, before He can do anything much through it. Well, let us see what God's object is, and while I would not say anything at all that would draw back from evangelization, from zeal in soul-winning, I want to say this, that the real measure of satisfaction to God is found in the measure of Christ that is in the one who is doing the work and therefore capable of being imparted. For one of the great troubles is this, that so many who have been brought to Christ have been led on such a slim basis with such a poor measure of Christ that they are rather poor specimens of Christianity and they never seem to grow up very much, to amount to very much. I mean that it is a poor calibre that is about today in numerous cases of Christians, so that there is something basic lacking in their very spiritual birth. You can have people born again upon a very rich basis and they will begin to move very truly and very much more fully.

I will give you an illustration of what I mean. There was a time when I used to baptize people just solely upon the basis of it being a commandment. Jesus was baptized and He commanded baptism and they came because it was a commandment, because Jesus did it, and they were going to follow His example and obey His commandment, and in the background it was that it was a tenet of the church and you could not be a member of the church unless you were baptized. That was the basis, and we did not get very much quality on that basis at all; they did not grow very much spiritually. The time came when I came to see as the Lord opened my eyes, that far greater significance of baptism — identification with Christ in death, the going out in His death and by union with Him in His death of the whole life of nature, the setting aside of the entire natural man, clearing the ground and making the way for a new man, Christ Himself indwelling, with all that that meant. I saw that, and then in giving that fuller word of the cross, that far greater message of identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, people came on the strength of that. We got altogether a different type of Christians; you could draw a broad line between the two companies. One of my problems was that people came and said, I never saw that when I was baptized, cannot I be baptized again? And I have been meeting that ever since. I am not talking now about baptism, I am talking of this matter of the end that God has in view to get a large measure of His Son. It is the Man that has ever been in God's thought from the beginning. "*Let us make man after our own image*" (Gen. 1:26) — that is the crown of creation, and the final crowning will be that new creation man in Christ.

The End of the Old Man and the Beginning of the New

Well then, I have said what follows the recognition of the main object. The death of Christ was the death of a man, that is, it was the end of one man who could never be that man that God is after. The Adam, corporate man, had got into such a state that God was not going to dissect and rebuild that man, He was not going to improve or reform Adam. That man had gone beyond the possibility of ever answering to God's original thought and so he must go out, and the Lord Jesus, in His death, died on that side as representative of a whole corporate man to get him out of the way.

To be in Christ, to be a Christian, is not to reform, is not to bring the old man over and put him at the disposal of God, is not to transfer your old man activities to divine activities, it is not to bring over anything of the Adam creation and to place it there at God's disposal. It is the end altogether and in Christ all things are new, not out from Adam, not out from ourselves; they are out from God (2 Cor. 5:17-18). Our energies and activities and all our capacities are now Holy Spirit energies and capacities and not ours at all. Our enthusiasm will never really reach God's end. Nothing that we can provide can reach that end. Oh, you say, then are we to be without zeal, without enthusiasm? No! I say, what is the motive power? Is it the Spirit of God or is it our own motive power? If it is our own motive power, the cross forms a barrier right across the road, placed by God,

and He says, No, you cannot get past this, you end there. From this point it is all of Myself or it is nothing at all; all out from Me or nothing at all!

Now that is God's fact. We learn God's fact sometimes over a long series of years, but what is happening is that we are simply being brought back all the time. God has not moved on at all, God has not gone on years. No, we are being brought back and if we did know the real meaning of consecration after years of Christian life, if we did know the meaning of it, the Holy Spirit's interpretation is simply this: I am only bringing you right back to what obtained at the very beginning where I was concerned, making real the foundation of things.

Well, the death of Christ, so far as God is concerned, was the removing of a man by death, a man that could not and cannot now stand before God as acceptable to be that man that God is seeking, clearing the ground of one man in order to make room for the other man. New birth is only upon that basis. "*Ye must be born again*" (John 3:7). Well, that pre-supposes that you are making a beginning all over again as though you had no existence before. You have come into being. That is new birth. It therefore does pre-suppose that there has been an end and an absolutely new beginning is necessary. "*Ye must be born again.*" If God says, You must be born again. With all that problem that Nicodemus has about it, the answer is, You can be born again, if God says that you must. Nicodemus says, How? The Lord's answer is, in effect, Do not bother about the how; you must and you can; if I say you must, you can. Most of us here know that it can be; we can be born again.

My point is this, that it is something entirely other that is born. What is it that is born again? What is the real nature of this new birth? Well, in a word it is this, Christ Himself is brought right into the centre of the being. It is a Bethlehem in our hearts, Christ born there, and that makes a being that never was before, a new kind of species. Christ in you — that is the hope of glory, and it is the only hope of glory, but it is the hope of glory if Christ is in you. There was no hope of glory in this other man, this fallen man, Adam, therefore God closed him down in the death of Calvary. Where is the hope of glory? In Christ; all the hope of glory is centred and fixed in Christ and if Christ is in us, there is hope of glory. "*Christ in you the hope of glory*" (Col. 1:27).

The Process of Conformity to Christ

A new man is brought into being and from the new birth the activity of the Holy Spirit is to progressively conform us to the image of God's Son, steadily making true what is true with God in the cross. The Holy Spirit is putting away progressively all that which can never be glorified, dealing with it and getting rid of it, and steadily — oh, so slowly it seems and often so imperceptibly, bringing in more of Himself, of His Son, through suffering and chastening, through all that which God sees fit to allow to come upon us. That is the object in view, bringing more of His Son in, the patience of Jesus Christ, the love of the Spirit, forbearance, selflessness, Christ being enlarged in us. You and I know quite well that the only way in which we really do learn and come to know the Lord is by being put into positions of absolute necessity to know Him, situations where only some fresh proving of the Lord will be our salvation. We are in that way coming more and more to be able to say, Well, I have proved the Lord in deep places, in much suffering and in perplexities. That proving of the Lord is an increase of Christ in us which is of tremendous value to the Body. It means that the Body is built up with that measure, the whole Body of Christ.

The church has ever made greater spiritual progress, been purer and had a far greater measure of Christ in times of suffering than in any other times. One of the great triumphs of the devil was to have given the church an easy time. What happened through Constantine, for instance, brought the church into line with the world, gave it favour and delivered it from its great time of persecution, and it lost its spiritual value. It

looks like inviting trouble, but there it is. Whether we are tried or not, the fact is that God is after this full measure of His Son and the formation takes place in the fires.

The End of the Process

So we are being brought by the perfecting of this work to a glorious end. The end is suggested by those words in Hebrews 2 — the inhabited world to come subjected to the Son of Man. What is man? *“Not unto angels did he subject the world to come, whereof we speak. But one hath somewhere testified, saying, What is man ... ?”* *“Let us make man after our own image.”* This man is clearly seen by what follows to be the man in Christ. It is Christ and all His members. I like that bit in the passage we read about measuring. I did not follow on with the next clause. *“Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations”,* it is left for the nations. That is significant. There will be something beyond this man, there will be that to be ministered by this man, there will be the nations to derive all the values that this man has. He will be at the centre, he will give character to all else, he will govern all else. This is his function, to rule, to govern in Christ in the ages to come. You say, Christ is going to rule, to reign! Yes, true, pre-eminently so, but not as an isolated unit, not as one isolated upon His throne; He will rule corporately, it will be Christ corporately reigning; He as Head but all through His members. That is what He is working at, and you and I are, if we did but see it, in that school to learn spiritual government, spiritual ascendancy, spiritual kingliness.

That is the lesson of everyday life — how can I govern, how can I bring this thing into subjection, how can I reign in life? The whole question of victory and defeat is the question of ultimate reigning. This is not going to be some mechanical thing. The Lord is not just going to take up people, even believers, and suddenly transfer them to a throne and say, Now I put you in this position irrespective of whether you are qualified for it or not, you have to reign over this province, fulfil this function of rulership! That is contrary to the Lord’s way of doing things. He will qualify for vocation, and you and I are being now qualified under the Spirit’s hand in all that we are going through. And the thing is very practical, not something up in the air at all. You may not be out of this place many minutes before you find something rising up in yourself that will threaten to eclipse Christ, something somewhere coming along just to set Christ at nought, some self-interest, some bit of self-pity. That is enough — occupation with yourself, your own disadvantages and your own difficulties and your own situations. All these things are there to be subjected to Christ. We think that we could be more like Christ and there would be more of Christ if only we could get out of that situation. The Lord knows better than you do about that and better than I do. The fact is that it does not work. The Lord has put us there and when we have got ascendancy then perhaps He will consider a change of place, not before. *“Reign in life”* — that is a present reigning. *“They that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ”* (Rom. 5:17). It is the man coming in again for reigning, and the school now is unto that.

I said this was a parenthesis, but it is not out of relation to all that the Lord is saying in this Conference. I think we shall see that to be if He goes on to lead us as He has, that this is a very important part of the whole, that He makes us priests and kings. That is no merely objective thing, but an inward thing, a spiritual thing; kings and priests unto our God.

The Lord give us to see what He is after and get us free from all those mechanical ideas of the Lord’s interest. Go right to the heart of things. God is after a man, and that man in you and in me and in all His own until at the centre of His universe He has a man after His own heart.