



the
Golden
Candlestick

**GOD'S INHERITANCE
OF GLORY IN SONS**

Part 3

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Volume 198

A FORETASTING OF THE GLORY IN TERMS OF PRAISE

“Then answered one of the young men, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is skilful in playing, and a mighty man of valour, and a man of war, and prudent in speech, and a comely person; and the Lord is with him” (1 Sam. 16:18).

For now I am returning the subject of chapter 4 when we were occupied with the ministry of praise and worship. I want to turn you to one of David’s Psalms, a Psalm to which we have referred a number of times, Psalm 22. You will note how the Psalm opens, and then pass from those words of terrible distress, darkness and affliction over to verse 22. “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the assembly will I praise thee.” You know that is quoted in Hebrews 2:12: “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise.”

Now, that Psalm 22 is headed with the words, “To the Chief Musician”. This is something handed over to the leader of praise, the leader of worship, to become a part of that great ministry under his direction. That is, it is something given by David to the chief musician for the people of God, an ordinance in Israel for ever. You remember how long afterwards when the kingdom had been rent and divided, the captivity had at last taken place and these seventy years passed, and the remnant returned and Nehemiah came back to rebuild the destroyed wall of Jerusalem and he restored this ministry of praise. He sought out the Levites and set them in two great companies to march in opposite directions towards each other and meet as they sang these praises, and the phrase is “as David had appointed”. So this is an ordinance in Israel forever. It is something which marks the recovery of testimony, if Nehemiah represents anything at all.

But what is this twenty-second Psalm? It is the pathway from the deepest depths to the highest heights, from the bitter cry of forsakenness up to the place of absolute victory and right into the heart of a resurrection family. For that is the point that the apostle is making so strongly in the letter to the

Hebrews where these words are quoted: “Both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one” (Heb. 2:11), one family, “for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise” (v. 12). Right into the heart of a resurrection family, there to sound the praises relating to His tremendous victory over death, and that is gathered into those terrible first words — “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” So here we have the end which is the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:6). That is the end, the end for which we are kept, to which we are being brought.

The eternal future

But what about the present? Surely that is not all reserved to the future, to the coming ages. Surely this is meant for the present in some spiritual experience and reality. Surely now the risen Lord would sing and does sing in the midst of His brethren, in the midst of the assembly. Of course, we need to make a little adjustment about this matter of future and present. It will be helpful if we just spend a minute or two on that matter, because sooner or later, we shall all, the young men and the young women included, have to come to recognize that in Christianity the eternal future is predominant. Do you grasp that? The predominant thing in Christianity is the eternal future. We have to adjust to that. It is *predominant*. It is over all, it is the thing which governs everything in the Christian life — the eternal future.

But it is here that we need just to get things adjusted. There was a period in our history in this country particularly, but also beyond, when there was a predominance of an unhealthy morbidity in relation to the future. You have only got to take up that hymn-book, and you know there is a predominantly Victorian section in it. Those of us who have just emerged out of the Victorian era remember so well that the hymns which were most loved were the hymns about going to heaven and about the loved ones in heaven, and somehow or other nothing could be sung or said without bringing in the deathbed! We took our last gasp and floated away on wings and so on, sat on some mystical cloud dangling our legs over the edge, striking a harp. All that was the mentality. I do not mean to be funny, but that was the kind of thing that obtained for a long time. It came from a reaction represented by the Puritans, a proper reaction in its way, but there it was, and it was not healthy. We now live in a time of the violent reaction to that. The pendulum has completely rebounded and swung to the other extreme, so that in our time it is this world and this life which has become more than anything else to most people. Things have so changed, with all the educational facilities and

possibilities and provisions, with all the facilities for travel and seeing the world, and getting about, with all the tremendous development of that, and all the opportunities that exist now in this world, especially for young people, which did not obtain fifty years ago. This world has become something very much more. This life has taken on a new significance. The pendulum has swung to the other extreme, and young people do not like those ideas and thoughts and hymns about going to heaven and all that sort of thing.

We have got to get adjusted over this. It may be an extreme opposite to what was, but it carries just as great a danger as what was. We have to reaffirm that whether you sing those hymns or not, whether you like those ideas or not, the fact is that that eternal future governs everything, and we have got to set our lives in the light of it. We have to set our education in the light of it, we have got to set all the facilities that are given to us in the light of eternity. Even our recreation has got to come under the government of that eternal future, for, after all, a true child of God is someone who is disrelated from this world, and a true child of God going on with God, will find it more and more difficult to have a comfortable relationship with this world. The fact is, we will find it more and more true that we are pilgrims and strangers here.

Schooling for eternity

Now, why all this? Because if it is true that the eternal future governs and dominates and overcircles everything for the people of God here on this earth, we have got to recognize one thing, that we are in a school for eternity, and that everything of the Lord in our lives is intended to be a part of our schooling for eternity. We will have to come to it. Some of us know this now increasingly as we get on. There is so much crowded into our lives which has no explanation nor justification if there is no eternal object in view. At the end the schooling is not completed. In the last years of our time we are not set out of school and given a little recreation, and playtime. We are not given a holiday at all. Right up to the end we are kept in the school and as we near the end we are conscious that we are only just beginning to learn. I said to myself yesterday morning, 'Oh, that I had my time over again with my present sense of how much there is to be known in the Word of God!' We could live another dozen lives on what we are glimpsing. It is because of this great truth that this is only the preparation, schooling and education for sonship. This is the way to something which will justify everything, and we have got to get hold of that, because this life does become so much. There is that in us which clings to this life, to this world, and thinks it is everything. Our major disappointments and our greatest sufferings are because of

temporal disappointments and things which belong to this life which are not as we would like to have them. It may be hard to accept, but sometimes it seems to me that the Lord is quite prepared to allow disappointments in a man's life so far as things here are concerned in order to get eternal things in that life. That is how it seems, so great is this matter of what we are called unto. We are called with a heavenly calling, and the glory lies there.

Joy a present fruit of the Spirit

What about this matter of praise? We are saying that the end is this fulness of praise, the whole universe filled with glory in terms of praise. That is the end, and I believe that the real fulfilment of this prophecy "In the midst of the church will I sing thy praise", is then. The real fulfilment, the completeness of that is then in the glory, when Christ in the midst of the great multitude which no man can number will sing in the midst of His brethren. But that future has got to come here, in some measure, and the future day does come into the present by the Holy Spirit. Remember that the Holy Spirit is the eternal Spirit and the Holy Spirit has the whole thing in mind and in hand, and is working towards the complete purpose of God, and everything that the Holy Spirit does is something that He is, so to speak, taking out of the eternal fulness and bringing it in. So the Holy Spirit, when He has His way, a free way, in the people of God and in the midst of the people of God will bring something of that eternal praise into their midst. He will bring Christ as the chief musician into our midst. He is bringing Christ in in many ways now. That is His work — to bring Christ in, and in many ways this is also His work, to bring that ultimate fulness of Christ's glory in praise, in singing, into His people now. That is sonship, and you and I are in the 'academy of music' of heaven now. We are supposed to be learning this great song of eternity.

Of course, we know it is true if we only look into our experience. When first the Lord came into our hearts, we thought we were ready for eternity right away, there was nothing more to be done. Heaven has begun; what are we waiting for? Yes, the Holy Spirit then gave us a touch of the ultimate. But then He has shown us ever since that we have to learn the principles of the way of glory, of sonship, and we are learning them in a hard school. Yes, the Holy Spirit would sing as Christ in our hearts and midst. It is what the New Testament speaks of so often as the Lord's joy. "That My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:11). Today we are historically, and I think in our hearts spiritually, remembering that great morning, but you remember about that morning when He appeared and spoke to them, it says "while they still disbelieved for joy" (Luke 24:41). If you are going to

be an unbeliever, be one of those! That is the only kind of unbeliever that is allowed. “They disbelieved for joy.” You see, the new note of the eternal future has been struck in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. That note did resound again and again on that day and during those forty days they were filled with joy, and then when the Holy Spirit came, you hear this note being struck everywhere. There was great joy in Jerusalem. They were scattered and it says “and there was much joy in that city” (Acts 8:8), and souls turned to the Lord. Well, it is true, “the fruit of the Spirit is ... joy” (Gal. 5:22). That simply means that if the Holy Spirit is having His way, He will bring something of that eternal future of glory into our hearts now. I do feel that this is something to be recovered. I speak to myself just as strongly as to you, because I can be just as miserable as anybody. We need to recover this, this which emerges from the triumph of the Lord, which comes up out of that dark depth of His forsakenness on our behalf. We need that to be recovered in our hearts.

There is a very great deal that is practical in this connection, for I find that I can gather the New Testament around it, and especially I can gather the letters of Paul around this very thing. When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, there was not much joy. There was neither joy at Corinth nor in the apostle’s heart, and remember he was a man full of the Holy Spirit and the condition of the heart of the apostle is a reflection of the Holy Spirit in him. If Paul cannot write with joy it is because the Holy Spirit in him is grieved. Therefore it means this — if this glory is to come in, if there is to be a foreshadowing and a foretasting of that eternal glory in terms of praise, things must not be as they were at Corinth. You never have the glory of the Father where there are divisions, not only between companies, but between groups, between twos and threes, and between twos alone. You will not have any song where that is so. If you really are governed by the Holy Spirit, if He is having His way in you, you will lose your song when you get out of tune with another child of God. Divisions, personal interests — “I am of Paul; and I of Apollos” (1 Cor. 1:12). Bring in the ‘I’ and the song goes out. It is true to principle.

So I could go through this letter touching on this and that. There is no song, no music, no praise, no glory in it. You can never conceive of the eternal glory as having in it people in sectarian, divisive conditions. You have got to live with that other Christian for all eternity there, so start now! If you want the glory then, have the glory now. That is the basis. You know quite well, as I do, that it is true to principle. Get right, get that trouble cleared up, let Euodia and Syntyche be of one mind, and the joy at once returns, the song comes in. It is always like that. It is a miserable thing to be out of spirit and

out of heart with another child of God.

Now, follow that through Paul. I am not going through all the letters, but you notice there are those where there is no song. To Galatia there is no song. It is almost a dirge, almost like a funeral march. Why? Things have been pulled down to the earth out of heaven, made traditional and legal. The song goes out when it is like that. Keep up in the heavenlies, off that kind of legalistic ground and the song will be heard. Think of Philippi, for example. Paul seems to be singing his way through his letter to the Philippians. "My brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown ... my beloved" (Phil. 4:1). He cannot stop to find words for this overflowing. The song comes out in full harmony for Philippi. Why? Well, look again and see. You have got the nearest approach to something in the Philippian church and the Philippian letter that you have in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit brings the eternal future down into the present if He has His way, and these are the conditions, the laws of that sonship which is the consummation of everything in glory. These are the laws, and I can only introduce you to them and make these suggestions. The point is this, that the Holy Spirit wants to make us a joyful people, the people of all people on this earth who are having a good time, to fill with that which is going to fill eternity. Therefore the Holy Spirit must not be grieved or resisted, He must not be checked and frustrated. If He has His way the result will be joy in our hearts.

I must leave it there. You see, this is the ministry which brings to God His inheritance. It does say that the Lord has got what He has set His heart upon, and that is revealed in the Psalm, the music, the joy of His people. "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head" (Ps. 133:1-2), and it is as precious to the Lord and more precious to the Lord than it is to anyone else.

“A MAN OF WAR”

“Then answered one of the young men, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is skilful in playing, and a mighty man of valour, and a man of war” (1 Sam. 16:18).

David’s triumphs the inheritance of Solomon

That is the first intimation of David’s life in relation to warfare, and what a life of warfare it was! Let us be reminded that what is standing over the whole of our consideration is how God comes into His inheritance. The apostle Paul said that he prayed on one occasion for the church that by the Holy Spirit it might have illumination and revelation as to God’s inheritance in the saints. I think that is what we are in today, we are in that prayer. I trust in the answer to that prayer, having illumination as to God’s inheritance in the saints, God’s getting to Himself glory by way of sons and sonship. As we have seen, the culmination, consummation, and inclusiveness of David’s life was found in Solomon, his son, and in Solomon, the son, the kingdom of glory came in. The Lord, in figure at least, came into His inheritance. But we must remember that Solomon’s great, glorious kingdom and reign, with all that is said about his magnificence, wealth, and his wisdom all rested upon the universal victory of David. You know that to be so.

You look at such passages as that in the 2 Samuel 8. We are arriving now at Solomon, it will not be long before he takes David’s place on the throne, “And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took the bridle of the mother city out of the hand of the Philistines. And he smote Moab ... and the Moabites became servants to David” (2 Sam. 8:1,2). We will not read the whole chapter because it is all like that, David bringing under every kingdom and every king. And then you pass to 2 Chronicles 9:26, and you have, as to Solomon, “And he ruled over all the kings from the River even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt.” The universal triumphs of David became the inheritance of Solomon, of the son.

It is quite impossible to fail to make the swift transition from David and Solomon to the greater Son of David, the Lord Jesus, how the church comes in as the vessel of the fulness of glory. “Unto Him be the glory in the church” on the ground of Christ’s universal victory. So that eventually that sonship in which the glory of God is secured and displayed rests upon Christ’s victory in every realm. This is a clear foreshadowing. If we want that stated precisely we have to come again to a passage which is almost too familiar, Heb. 2:5 — “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.” You know how the passage goes on. “We see not yet all things subjected to Him. 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” (v. 8,9). And then the Word goes on “For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise.” And further, “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers (‘partners’ is the real word) in a heavenly calling ...” (Heb. 3:1). The heavenly calling, the dominion in Christ, with Christ, over the whole world. It is a tremendous thought that sons are called to something higher than the vocation of angels. “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6:3), says the apostle. “Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?” (v. 2). It is tremendous. This is the calling of sons in Christ.

But the realisation of this dominion, this heavenly calling, is not without warfare. It is not just going to happen. It is the occasion of a terrific warfare, and that warfare is not just something that goes on. Do not get the abstract mental conception of there being a war on and somehow or other we have got something to do with it, and we call ourselves soldiers and sing hymns about it. It is something very much more than that, as many of you know. It is not something just objective and abstract. It is something which involves us and demands of us a very real training in understanding, in knowledge, in tactics, and in everything that has to do with war. If it is sons who are to inherit with Christ, we know well by now that sonship is an ultimate thought. It is the issue of some process, and so, as we are being trained as sons, we are being trained in war, for that is a way of the inheritance of sons. It is warfare.

Now, it says here that David was a man of war. Weigh the words well — a man of war. His manhood was such. That was what David was. It was

not something that he took on and assumed. He was that, he was a fighter — not that he loved a fight for fighting’s sake, not that he was trained in a military school and therefore it had become a kind of second nature to him to fight. That was not true, and it was certainly not true that he had a great deal of superfluous energy for which he found relief in a fight. There are a lot of people like that and they think they are good fighters. That is not the basis of this thing at all. I am not saying these things just for something to say. They lie behind this whole matter of warfare. You may not, by nature, be a fighter. You may have no natural inclination for fighting, no appetite for a fight, and certainly you may not feel qualified and trained for it. You are not exempt on any of those grounds. You are, whether you like it or not, involved in warfare; it is a part of your calling. Your destiny and your inheritance lie along this line. So we have to look deeper to see what it was that made David a man of war, because if we can put our finger upon that, we shall see exactly what will make us warriors. It will be exactly the same thing in us as in him.

David’s jealousy for the rights of God

What was it really that made David a man of war? In the first place, quite clearly, it was indignation for the rights of God and for the rights of God’s people, a real sense of personal responsibility for the interests of God in His people. That is how it worked out in the first place in very simple forms. That sense of responsibility showed itself in battle. It showed itself in secret, and remember what we said earlier about this, because all the fighting is not done in public. We do not begin to be fighters in public. We are that, and therefore it goes on when no one is watching. I am referring to his encounters with the lion and the bear. David, away there in the seclusion and isolation of the fields of Bethlehem, where no eye was upon him as far as he knew, where no one could take account of his procedure and therefore no one would have been able to spread abroad a tale of his cowardice, by this sense of responsibility took on a lion and a bear for the sake of a lamb. I take it that his father Jesse was a man of some large competence and possessions. He sent very bountiful gifts to his other sons in the army, and what is one lamb? The lion could have that! But no, it was a lamb, and it belonged to his father and it belonged to his flock and it was a part of his responsibility. His responsibility came down to a single lamb. And that sense of responsibility for a very small thing led him out to something which involved his whole life, for, as we said before, it is no small thing to take on a lion. Neither is it a small thing to take on a bear. This tremendous undertaking, involving so much risk, so much courage, was brought right down to a very small question. “He that

is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much” (Luke 16:10). That is the story of David’s life. Faithful for a little lamb, and you shall be trusted with a whole nation.

But to go back. It was there behind the scenes that David was led out and exercised by this sense of responsibility. It was that that made him the man of war. No, let us repeat, not because he liked fighting, nor because he was so despised, nor for any other reason. But you see it when he came out to his first big fight, with the giant. It was this indignation for God’s rights and God’s rights in His people. The man is just stirred to his depths by this thing. “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (1 Sam. 17:26). Indignation. How his soul was stirred by this sense of responsibility. This is what makes warriors. In proportion to that consciousness and that sense, we shall fight the Lord’s battles or we shall not fight them. We can hear those words of another great warrior: “Knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel” (Phil. 1:16). Paul and David were jealous over God’s interests.

Faithfulness in small things

Now let me first of all repeat — it begins often in very small ways. If you are looking for and waiting for great opportunities, waiting for the day of a great work to do for the Lord, what you call your life work, and you are thinking in terms of something big, let me tell you that there is a law established by God, and you will not be able to get out of it. You may put yourself into something that you think big, and you may create for yourself something that you think big, and organise a big movement and be the centre of it. In the long run it may be that that, after all, in its intrinsic value was very small. Not all that looks so big, immense, extensive, is counting in that intrinsic way. Oh yes, after a year or two or a time, so much of it has fallen away and cannot be found. God’s principle holds. It is one of the laws that He has established. Like all the laws of nature, you can observe them or you can violate them, and you do not get away with it. You just cannot hood-wink God, even in the laws of nature, so do not deceive yourself if you are expecting or looking for some large sphere and opportunity of service. Do remember this law: it will come by way of faithfulness in the small things. It may be a very small thing, a very menial thing, it may be just one lamb, and you might be disposed to undervalue, underrate it, despise it, and think that it does not represent enough to justify all your life and energy and thought. But David put his life into the saving of that lamb, and if he was the sensible man that we are going to see that he was, he did not do this presumptuously or

rashly. He knew what he was doing, and it was a life for a life with him, and there would have been no more afterwards, no more life for a *young* man. He put it all into this little thing, and our whole life may hang upon some small thing, our whole life of service for God may be bound up with faithfulness in something very small, something that we might easily despise and think it is not worth our while. That is very searching, but it is very true, and the Lord has brought some of us down there. He will not let us get on and away until this thing has been the scene and the occasion of a complete and utter abandonment to the Lord on that.

But this works out in so many ways. Do not get the objective picture. It comes very near home, a sense of responsibility for the Lord's interests. What a lot of ground that covers. Take the matter of the fellowship of the Lord's people. Has not the Lord got a tremendous interest bound up with the fellowship of His people, the relatedness of His children, their oneness? That represents a tremendous thing for the Lord. You see, all Calvary was focussed upon that thing, because disintegration, disruption, and the breakup of human relationships was the result of Satan's work, and the Son of man was manifested to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). The wonderful thing is immediately Calvary is over, you find that a scattered and disintegrated company is in one man, the mighty victory of the cross. Be tremendously jealous over this matter of fellowship, of relatedness, and take responsibility. That is real warrior spirit. That is entering into the fight. When I see people in a corner talking under their breath about things or people in the fellowship, and as I sense something that is not happy, not good, something that they would not like to say openly and be heard saying, I say those are people who are never going to count in the great issue. This is detracting from the glory of God, this is taking something from the Lord. Be careful what you lend your ears to. Be careful if there is something of a grievance, a disaffection, because that can lead to an undoing to things, a letting down of things, a bringing in of something, such as some root of bitterness. Though you may understand that that person has a lot on their side, be careful. You are in danger of opening the door to the devil if you take it on in sympathy, listen to it, and take sides against someone else. This is a battle with the powers of evil, this matter of fellowship. We have got to take responsibility for the Body of Christ and fight its battles. We could pursue that in many directions and many connections. But you see the point from what I have said. The enemy is always trying to bring in his victory, the defeat of Christ along the line of whisperings, mutterings, murmurings and complainings. The church at Corinth, as we have said before, had no glory in it, no song, no joy, for this very reason. And so the apostle writing

brought in Israel's calamitous end in the wilderness. "They were overthrown in the wilderness ... neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured" (1 Cor. 10:5,10). Murmuring, that is all. They lost the inheritance, and the Lord lost His inheritance, by murmuring. Beware of your murmuring. You may think there is something to murmur about, but the enemy would like to get us murmuring, complaining, criticising. The point is, 'Now then, what is going to be the issue of this? Is this going to work out for the glory of God? Is this going to bring the inheritance in to the Lord? Is this the way of sonship, or is this something else?' It becomes a matter of personal responsibility for all this is the testimony of Jesus. We like that phrase, 'the testimony', and we use it. But what is the testimony? Is it some conception of truth, some system of interpretation of Christianity, some wonderful vision in the abstract? No! The testimony is what Jesus fought for and battled through to in His cross. We are brought into that battle which involves jealousy for the true nature of the Lord's interests.

I have spoken about Corinthians. I pass in mind to Galatians. You know that the Galatian letter sets forth the pulling of things down out of the heavens onto the earth, out of the spiritual into the temporal, out of the eternal into the merely now. Paul was the man of the heavenly vision. With that vision he had gone to Galatia. Those believers had come into their relationship with Christ on heavenly ground, and the Judaizers had followed up, pulled them out of their heavenly position, brought them down to mere ordinances and rites and Old Testament legality, and Paul is on the warpath. If ever Paul's soul was stirred to battle, it was over the Galatian situation. His jealousy came to white heat. I am not exaggerating. As he repeats twice, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again ... let him be anathema." That is his jealousy at white heat for the true, spiritual, heavenly nature of things as opposed to religion that is merely traditional and formal. It is a battle. What a battle it was for Paul!

Warriorship demands utter selflessness

Such warriorship, to be such a man of war, makes one inclusive demand. It demands utter selflessness. If you are going to think about your own skin, interests, future, position, anything that has to do with you, you will not tackle a lion or a bear, and you will certainly not tackle Galatia. The utter selflessness of this man! How all self-interest and consideration was swamped and overwhelmed by this concern and jealousy for the Lord. We have got to be in this with our lives. I cannot help quoting again and again those things

which seem to me to get so much to the point. Yesterday I cited Paul in this way. “As always, so now ... Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death” (Phil. 1:20). ‘I am all in this. If I perish, I perish, but here goes, I am in it; this one thing I do.’ Dear friends, spiritual warfare prompted by this sense of responsibility, does demand an utter selflessness. A person who has a personal interest of any kind will find themselves entirely incapable, and all others will find them entirely incapable, of effecting anything in spiritual warfare. They are of the divided heart. They have got something else that is keeping them out of the war. They may think they are in it and they may have a go at it, but nothing comes of it. They may use the language, the phraseology, of war, and so on, but nothing happens. They are beating the air. The same is true of anybody who has a personal problem. If you have a personal problem of a spiritual character, you are out of the fight. Oh, how the devil loves to bring in personal, spiritual problems, and I think he does it most with people who are the most dangerous people to his kingdom. If only that man or that woman could get away from their own spiritual problem, how they would count for the Lord, how they would register. They would mean something tremendous; but they are all tied up, locked up, by this personal spiritual problem. It may be as to their acceptance with the Lord, as to the Lord’s attitude to them, it may be anything like that. You may make tremendous attempts at fighting, but until you have settled that spiritual problem, you will effect nothing in the battle. The enemy has caused us to be flung into the vortex of a great difficulty, perplexity and problem, dominated by a big ‘Why’ where the Lord is concerned. Those have been the times when we could not fight, when we effected nothing. It will always be like that. We have to get over our problems, to get clear of these spiritual matters, if we are going to count.

Warriorship begins with worship

This is all in such accurate sequence. David’s warfare as a man of valour and a man of war began with his worship. The singing part came first, and true singing, the right kind of singing, if it is singing that is from the heart, means that we are beautifully free from ourselves. That is what singing ought to mean. It does not always mean that, but that is what it ought to mean. We sing because we are delivered from ourselves. Worship comes first, and what does worship mean? Well, it is all the Lord, not myself, not my problem, my circumstances, my difficulty, it is the Lord; my heart is towards the Lord. When it is like that, we can be fighters, and only if it is like that shall we really be fighters. So it comes back to a very practical point. Very often the

first battle and the first phase of the warfare and of every fresh battle and every fresh skirmish, is the battle in our own hearts to let go to the Lord. It is probably the most difficult battle you and I and all Christian people have to fight, to know how to let go to the Lord. We will hold on, we have got our teeth in and we are not letting this thing go, we are not giving this thing up. We believe with all our might that this is the will of God and this is what the Lord means, but you know there is that in the Word of God which shows us that we are not to personally hold on to the things of the Lord.

Abraham and Isaac are the great outstanding illustration in the Old Testament. God gave Isaac when he was utterly impossible. By a miracle, a mighty intervention, Isaac was given to Abraham and then the Lord said, 'Take him and offer him.' What a problem for Abraham! If he had liked to have had a problem, if he wanted to have a problem, he had got one, and that could have been nursed for ever and paralysed him completely. He went through on the great fighting art of letting go to God. It is a tremendous thing to be able to let go to God, even to hand back to the Lord what He has given you, what you believe to be of Him, to say, 'Now, Lord, I let go, I am not going to have my own way about this, I hand this back to you; if you want this, then you see to it that it is established, that it is done; I have no question whatever about it that it was of You, but I just hand it over to You.' There is such a lot of personal holding on, even to the things of the Lord, and making them ours, our bit of work, our sphere, our line of things. Oh, this personal jealousy for what we call the interests of the Lord, but after all we have turned His interests to our own. Have you learned the mighty victory of letting go to God? It means handing it all up, standing back, being in that detached position where you are quite ready that it shall never come back if the Lord does not want it, but if it is to be of the Lord He shall do it, and you will not. That makes warriors. You find that not once nor twice you have to fight that battle, but you learn life lessons along that line. You come to the place where you say, 'I know, I have learned that to hold on is to lose, to hold on is defeat, to hold on myself with my own strength of will, mastery and determination is to be put out of the fight, to be rendered useless. And the days and the weeks and the months and the years are passing by, and the real work of the Lord is not being done because I have held this so much to myself, even the thing which I believed to be of God.' That is a lesson that you must learn — how to let go to the Lord. I would like to pursue that thought through David's life, because it came out more than once, how, when it was in his power to do something he stood back, and said, 'I am not putting my hand on that; I am leaving that to the Lord.' A man of war. Along that line you attain to the glory in sonship. That is the way.

We just touch on these things, briefly and imperfectly and incompletely. Remember, the way of sonship, God's inheritance, is the way of a grim and terrific warfare, but it comes down to light on what we may call small practical matters in life. It involves us in the whole question of our zeal and our sense of responsibility. Oh, may I make that appeal? May I stress that? Do ask the Lord to give you an adequate, sufficient sense of responsibility for His interests, that you become responsible people and you are not going to have anything that militates against the interests of the Lord.

“A MAN OF GOOD PRESENCE”

This message is one of a series for the purpose of speaking to the people of God about His thoughts for them. This time I attempt to interweave the message to Christians with the gospel to the unsaved, or I turn aside for that purpose in particular at some point. I am going on, of course, with the message of the conference, but perhaps this will prove to be the most extraordinary text ever taken for the gospel. We find it in that very same verse of 1 Samuel 16. I am going to skip one clause and hold that over till later and take the one which follows it. The verse as a whole reads like this — “Then answered one of the young men, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is skilful in playing, and a mighty man of valour, and a man of war, and prudent in speech, and a comely person; and the Lord is with him” (v. 18). For now, I am leaving the phrase “and prudent in speech”, and taking the next — “a comely person”. I am quite sure you have never heard the gospel preached on that! It is, however, a very unfortunate translation. It would be more accurately translated, and indeed I think quite accurately translated “a person of good presence” — a description of David. This verse contains the many-sided introduction of this young man David, and it is impressive and remarkable to note how every one of these clauses or these descriptions worked out to be true to the full in the whole life of David.

God’s ideal for man

“A comely man” or “a man of good presence”. From one standpoint the whole Bible turns upon a man. It begins with “Let us make man.” This psalmist, David, gives utterance to those wonderful words which had a range so far beyond his own consciousness when he uttered them, as in Psalm 8 — “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him but little lower than the angels, and crownest him with glory and honour. Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands” (v. 4-6). We saw earlier how those words proved

to be prophetic, a pointer to the Lord Jesus. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews attaches them to Christ, to those sons being brought to glory, partners in that heavenly calling, to have the throne of glory with Him, to reign with Him. The whole course of God's activities through the ages is to secure sons for glory, and to train them as sons for the purposes of reigning in glory and manifesting His glory in the ages to come. He is securing those sons by new birth, bringing men and women into that new life in Christ which Christ called being born again, or born from above. Securing them, He institutes a lifelong process of forming them as sons. The apostle calls that conforming them to the image of His Son, and all with the view to bringing them to full stature, the full measure, of Christ.

So God has no place for dwarfs. God has no place for deformed people. God has no place for people with a blemish or an eccentricity. Of course, I am not speaking naturally, I am speaking in spiritual terms. What God has in view is perfect men and women, perfect in the sense that there is no arrest about their development, there is no deformity in their lives, their characters, their make-up, there is no blemish upon them to mar their beauty and their glory. There is nothing about them eccentric and singular, as making them something that is not normal. God's idea of a normal man and woman is that they should be whole, complete. Now that is what He is working towards, that is what is in His mind whenever He gets hold of a life. His intention is to make that man and that woman complete, whole, perfect, so that ultimately His own glory can shine out through such.

Man as he is apart from God

Man by nature is anything but that. The Bible gives us a terrible picture of man. You will not believe it, because you will not see your own likeness as you look at it, but there it is. The Bible's picture and view of man is of something which has been arrested in its growth, stunted in its development, something which is twisted and deformed, something which, on top of that, is blind, and further it is palsied, lame, deaf, deceived, and devil-dominated. You do not believe that of yourself, but that is God's picture of man by nature. You say, 'Not any one of those things is true of man really — that he is stunted and arrested in his development.' The Bible says he is. There may be kinds of development in human life, but history shows — and the longer we live we come to prove — that there is a terrible throw-back to the barbarous side of human nature in spite of all its civilisation, education, science and so-called progress. It throws back continually to the most ghastly and awful things conceivable — what man can do to man in a day like this.

He is arrested in some part of his being. Somehow in his nature he is still dwarfed and stunted.

Now how can we prove that? On what ground? Well, it is very simple. I might take you on to a ladder that is going to reach up very high to some steeple, some very high place, and as you begin to go up, your knees begin to tremble and your hands begin to get very wobbly and unsteady, and I say to you, 'You are like a man with a palsy, you are all shaky, you are not steady, you had better come down.' And I take you down and do something to you, do something in you, and then say, 'Now then, up again' and you go — no trembling, no shaking, no feebleness, straight, strong, up to the top. You come down and you say, 'Before that happened to me, I was like a man with a palsy, I could not walk straight, I could not walk steady, I would not have believed I was such a hopeless kind of creature until I became something else.'

Take the blind. I may take you into some place, take you in again and again, and you come out, but after you have been in and out for a long time, one day, I take you in and I say, 'Have you ever seen this?' You look and then I begin to describe in such a way that you are able to see that. You say, 'I never saw that before. Until you did that something to me which gave me the opening of my eyes, I was a blind man.' And so you could go on over this matter of being stunted and dwarfed.

Christians know quite well what I am talking about, how limited we were, how tied up, how little we were, and then something happened, and we look back and say, 'Was it ever possible that I should have been such a little, contemptible, small thing as I was? Somehow or other, I have been tremendously enlarged. I only began to grow at that time.' You see what I mean. Something happens, and it is true, whether you feel a dwarf or not, by nature you are. Something has come in to arrest your development, and you will never develop in that inward way unless that mighty something happens. There is no evolution in that realm. You just do not grow up into all God's thought naturally. Something has to happen to release you from an arrest.

And it is true in all these other things. Christians know what it is to be able to hear what they never could hear before, to see what they never could see before, to come into a life of fulness of which they had no conception before, to be able to walk and to do what was utterly impossible before. What has happened?

The Lord Jesus makes man whole

Do you know the meaning of that word 'salvation' — just making whole. The Lord Jesus came into this world and as He passed down the way, here is

a blind man, and there is a deaf man, and there is a palsied man, and there is a lame man, and there is a devil-ridden man, and every other kind is in that way, and as He passed on He left them all whole men; they were saved. The effect of Jesus Christ is to save in this sense of making men whole.

A man after God's own heart

Now you come back to David. David was said to be a man after God's own heart. He answered to God's idea, not perfectly, but in some very real respects, those which matter most to God, which to God are features and characteristic of a son, of sonship. What were the things in David that answered to God's heart? In other words, what were some of the marks of David's greatness so that it was said of him that he was a man of good presence, a man who could be looked upon and admired, looked upon with great respect and admiration, so that from God's standpoint it could be said — That is a man indeed. What were some of the marks of that greatness of spiritual stature which characterised David?

The quality of meekness

I will tell you what God regards as marks of greatness, what in God's presence is something acceptable, what it is that makes a man or a woman of 'good presence'. The first outstanding thing, I think probably the most outstanding thing about David, was his meekness. Many of you here who know your Bibles know what a tremendous store God lays by meekness, what a first and high place God gives to meekness. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit" (Isa. 66:2). Meekness, but what does that mean? Well, it just means self-emptiness, and self-emptiness by being emptied. By nature we are not empty, we have to be emptied. One of the things which God attends to very carefully to get to sonship is our emptying. Take comfort and encouragement from that, for it is on the way to the glory to be emptied. The great Son of God went that way. The apostle says, "He emptied himself ... Wherefore also God highly exalted Him" (Phil. 2:7,9). The way to the exaltation is the way of the emptying. We cannot empty ourselves, but when we come to the Lord He begins this terrible process of emptying us of ourselves to make room for Himself, and that emptiness of self is the essence of meekness. David never claimed to be as good as the other man. He always thought himself to be the worst of men. Read his Psalms. There are Psalms in which David gives expression to his own conception of himself which are abject and miserable. His meekness

was like that. He always regarded himself as being poorer stuff than other men, never as good as the other man. That was his meekness. God looks in that direction and says, 'That is a man after my heart.' Oh, you know quite well that when God was here in the flesh in the Person of His Son, the one thing which caused Him to express loathing, was self-righteousness, self-sufficiency, pride. The most scathing or injuring things that ever passed the lips of the Son of God were directed towards that kind of thing where men were making a great deal of themselves and parading before others their own goodness and righteousness and importance, the value of themselves in their own eyes. The Lord Jesus put that sort of thing in a very great contrast. There went a Pharisee and a publican up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee, ostensibly talking to God but really talking over his shoulder to the poor publican, said, "God, I thank thee, that ..." and the one thing about that man was *I* – in the presence of God! The Lord Jesus said the other man dared not even lift his eyes to heaven, and said, "God, be thou merciful to me a sinner." The Lord Jesus said that that was the man that went to his home justified. This was a very strong way of putting His seal upon self-emptiness, meekness. It is the direction in which God looks. David was like that.

His meekness worked out in many other ways; among them, see how he suffered intensely when he went wrong. Never for a moment did he excuse himself. Never for a moment did he blame someone else. Never for a moment did he justify himself, but condemned himself outright. Some of these Psalms are really Psalms from a broken heart because it has failed God. David sinned, yes, David sinned. But if ever a man suffered agonies for his sin, David did, and if ever man was filled to overflowing with the consciousness of the utter mercy of God to a sinner, that man was David, and that is his meekness. Anything but meekness always finds some excuse or some scapegoat, someone to blame, or makes less of it than it is, but meekness goes down on its face in broken-heartedness over all failure, because it knows that it hurts God.

See again how he suffered reproach without vindictiveness. It is a mark of meekness to suffer wholly unjustly, to be cruelly treated, viciously assailed, robbed and deprived of everything in this life, home and family and everything else. See how he suffers it without any vindictiveness. There is no revenge about David. Here is this man Saul occupying the place of the throne and seeking to make David's life an utter martyrdom, and on his trail to kill him, and that went on, not for a little while, but for years. And more than once that man Saul was put into David's hands. He just caught him, so to speak, red-handed. His own friends said, 'Look here, now is your chance to rid yourself of this life enemy, to finish the whole thing', and mark you,

they said, ‘The Lord has put him into your hand, you can do this with a good conscience, surely the Lord has brought this about.’ But no, David said, “The Lord forbid that I should put forth my hand against the Lord’s anointed” (1 Sam. 26:11), and let him go, not once. And then at length the Lord did the thing. In battle Saul died a terrible death on the high field, and what did David do? Did he gloat, did he sigh a sigh of relief, did he say, ‘Thank the Lord he is dead and out of the way, I will never again be bothered by him’? One of the most heartrending, heart-touching things in the whole Bible is David’s lament over Saul, most beautiful words of genuine grief over Saul and over Jonathan his son. And that was not all. We know the story of Jonathan and David’s attachment, but Jonathan did take sides with his father, and go into battle with him to the end. That may have been very noble, but you know a little man would have been piqued over Jonathan. If David had been a little man like some people, he would have had a grudge against Jonathan. He would have said: ‘He had a chance of standing by me. He knew quite well what his father was after, to take my life, but he stayed with his father.’ He might have felt very sore about that, but here when Jonathan and his father Saul are slain in battle, what did David do afterwards? He searches the country and says, “Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” (2 Sam. 9:1). ‘Find me anybody, if I can do them a good turn for Jonathan’s sake.’ There was no sign of pique or ill-feeling about that, was there? He is a big man, yes, a man of presence indeed. This is meekness. There was nothing small, contemptible or mean about him.

Wealth accumulated for the House of God

Another thing that made David great (in this connection I prefer the word ‘big’) made him a big man in the right, true sense, is the way in which he accumulated wealth for the house of God. I shall probably touch upon that again later, but there is one aspect of that that I will mention now. We have already hinted at it — how David took hold of every experience of suffering and sorrow, and wrung out of it something for God and God’s people. Did he go into a deep and dark experience? He has taken hold of that deep and dark experience and given something to all the generations to follow for their enrichment. Whatever it was David’s attitude was ‘There is something in this that I can turn to account for the generations to come to the glory of God, for the good of God’s people.’ That is how we came by our Psalter. You know that is not the little person’s way of looking at their troubles. Troubles usually turn us in on ourselves and tie us up and lock us up in ourselves. We

begin to develop that awful disease of self-pity, for that is what it is. It is a malignant disease. We draw a little fence round ourselves and live within that little world of our own trouble, and we get more and more sour. That is how little people react in their troubles. But here is a man who knew something, perhaps only a faint taste, but to him it was an awful thing, of what the great Son of God knew on the cross when He cried as in the words of Psalm 22 — “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Just a taste of a sense of forsakenness. It was not real forsakenness, as the rest of the Psalm shows. A little later on David came back from that, and simply said that the Lord had not left him, but it seemed like it; but for all time and for all posterity out of that deep and terrible experience of seeming forsakenness of God, David has given a heritage to the people of God and to the glory of God.

The point is that his attitude towards suffering was this: there is something in this that can work out for the good of God’s people and the glory of God. To take an attitude like that towards adversity and suffering requires character; it is bigness.

A unifying passion

One other thing I would point out about David as a feature of his spiritual and moral greatness was how he was dominated by a single unifying passion. His whole being was unified by this passion. Just look at those words of his in Psalm 69:6-8: “Let not them that wait for thee be put to shame through me, O Lord God of hosts: let not those that seek thee be brought to dishonour through me, O God of Israel. Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother’s children. For the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.” What is all the trouble about? Why all this suffering, reproach, ostracism? “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” And you know that those words were taken up as a prophecy and applied to the Lord Jesus. They saw Him go into the temple court. Finding there the merchants making merchandise of holy things in the precincts of the house of God, His jealousy for His Father’s honour roused Him, and He made a whip of cords, and went in and drove them all out, and overturned their tables, and said, “Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise” (Joh. 2:16), and those looking on caught up this word from Psalm 69. It says, “His disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for thy house shall eat me up” (v. 17). What does that represent? Well, a unifying passion, His whole life gathered into one object, the glory of His Father, the glory of God, causing Him to be watchful and alert for anything that would bring dishonour to His

Father. It says that He went in and looked round and then He went away, and *then* He came back. He had been on the alert, He had been watchful, taking account, taking in the situation. He came back to deal with it. Watchfulness concerning anything that would bring dishonour to His Father, a mighty concern for His Father's honour and glory, and then a tremendous courage to carry out His concern and His watchfulness into effect.

David was like that. I cannot turn you to the large amount that there is in the books of Samuel and of Chronicles about David's concern for the house of God. We shall touch on that again probably. But there it was, one unifying passion. His life was a unity, his life was a singleness of motive and object, and that made him great, and it always does. It is a mark of greatness. This is spiritual quality, making a man of presence.

The power of the indwelling Spirit

But, having said it all, we need to be helped there, and so we take another picture, or two other pictures, twin pictures, the negative and the positive. Look into your gospels and see the picture of the disciples or our Lord there. In the gospels they are little men. If there is anything that marks littleness, it is jealousy. A big person knows no jealousy or envying. Rivalry, trying to outdo one another, to get the advantage of one another is a mark of littleness. There is pride, and a tremendous amount of self-sufficiency. They are little men in the gospels. I am sorry to have to say that about disciples of the Lord, but there they are. But see them after the Holy Spirit had come and taken possession of them. Now there is no trace of any of those things. All jealousy, envy, rivalry and pride has gone. They are different men. They were cringing little men before, cowards, and afraid, running for their lives. See them now. They stand up before rulers; they now have the spirit of courage, boldness. They are not intimidated by all the threats. They are on top of the situation, they are big men now.

What has done it? The same thing as will do it with you and with me. Just exactly the same mighty power is for us as they came to know. The Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, coming to indwell, deals with all our littleness. A Spirit-possessed, a Spirit-indwelt, Spirit-governed man or woman will not remain indefinitely small. If we are small, if there is jealousy, envy, pride, rivalry, cowardice, if there is anything like this that speaks of little spiritual stature, and that goes on too long, it declares that you and I, if we are like that, are knowing all too little about life in the Spirit. It just happens. You do not have to do anything about it. When the Spirit of Christ comes in, it changes, it releases. It cuts that hold to limitation, and you begin to grow

and be enlarged and become something, while not of self-importance — no, never — you become something to be reckoned with. Now, whatever we are by nature, we may be little, we may be all that I have said by nature, we may literally be poor specimens of humanity, but remember when the Holy Spirit gets into a life, the least one becomes significant, the least one takes on a new meaning. It is the wonder of the gospel, it is the wonder of salvation. It makes us whole. It is the wonder of what Christ does in a life. It lifts it right out of its insignificance and begins to make it something that matters, a man or a woman of presence.

You know that when you meet a person in whom Christ is really having His way, whatever they may be naturally — unlearned, uneducated, untrained or everything else at a disadvantage, you meet someone who counts, and in heaven's eyes counts more than all the noble of this world. That is the way in which God comes into His glory. God does not get any glory out of our littleness, however it is expressed, out of our jealousies and rivalries and envies, all that sort of thing. When we grow spiritually and leave those childish things behind, then the glory of God begins to be seen in us. When we are fully grown at last, sons of the living God in full realisation, there will be a fulness of glory. You know what the last picture of the Bible is. It is the city of God, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. You know that all that is in that book of the Revelation is symbolic, and that city is a type or a symbol of the people of God, the church, this sonship in full realisation. But you notice two things about it: it is very big, it is immense, and it is very magnificent, it is very beautiful. And the beautiful thing about it is this, that on the foundations of its marvellous wall are written the names of the twelve apostles — those men who once quarrelled, who entered into those rivalries, envied one another, tried to outdo one another, those men who forsook Him and fled and ran for their lives. Here are their names on the most costly things. Look again at those foundations. Look at that wall, the foundations of which are adorned with precious stones, and the names of these men. What God has wrought! What God can do! This is not just imaginary now, this is not some beautiful idea. It is what God is working for with you and with me, to bring in the preciousness of His Son in terms of sonship, by our enlargement, our spiritual enlargement.

To be continued.