



*the
Golden
Candlestick*

**THE REVELATION OF
THE FATHER**

**DISCIPLESHIP IN THE
SCHOOL OF CHRIST**

T. Austin-Sparks

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INTRODUCTION

It was during a conference in York, October 1962, that T. Austin-Sparks felt led by the Lord to deviate from the general theme and speak about the revelation of God the Father by the Son (published in 'A Witness and a Testimony', 1971).

One month earlier he spoke on the same subject of the revelation of the Father, at Aeschi, Switzerland. This is the first of four messages of the conference 'Discipleship in the School of Christ' that have not been included in the book that has been published under the same title, comprising the first nine messages of the conference.

THE REVELATION OF THE FATHER

Reading: John 16:1-17:26

I want you just to pass your eye over that prayer again —

“He said, Father ... Now Father ... I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them ... As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee ... Father, that which thou hast given me ... O righteous Father.”

“I manifested thy name ... I made known ... thy name”, and, quite evidently, from this chapter and from the whole of this Gospel, the name which the Lord Jesus manifested and made known was “Father.”

That may not impress us as it would have done those in His own time, for, with the Lord Jesus, there came in a revelation of God which was nothing less than revolutionary. Go back to the Old Testament and look at the manifestation of God in the names and titles which are given to Him there. They are many, wonderful, very great and very glorious, but they are usually very remote, and put Him in a place of holy and awful isolation. He is there the one who is unapproachable in Himself, and whose presence always created fear, even terror. If there was anything approximating to the coming near of God, even in those strange forms of manifestation called the ‘theophanies’, when in the first place those visited thought it was a man and then afterwards realized it was the Lord, the people cried out in fear and terror. And the Lord said even to Moses, who was such an honoured, choice, faithful, devoted servant: “Man shall not see me and live” (Exodus 33:20). When a man wrestled with Jacob and subsequently departed, Jacob cried: “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Genesis 32:30). To him that was a most wonderful thing! Of course, he had met the veiled deity — the veiled God had come in man form — but, even so, Jacob recognized that it was the Lord, and the wonderful thing was that his life remained whole in him.

When the Lord Jesus came into this world He brought an altogether revolutionary revelation of God, and the one word which was on His lips more than any other was ‘Father’ — ‘My Father’, ‘The Father’.

This seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel is, as you can see, the culmination and summation of all that has gone before of the life of the Lord Jesus and the manifestation of the Son of God with all His works and words. The end has come, for you will notice that the next chapter begins: "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where there was a garden." Then the final scenes of His earthly life were enacted and the cross followed. So this prayer is the gathering up of everything by Jesus. He is gathering up the very purpose for which He came into this world, the meaning of all His teaching and His works, the meaning of His having been here in this world, and He is putting it into one marvellous word, or name: 'Father'. He is saying: 'I have done what I came for. I came to manifest *Thy* name.' Note the way in which He puts it. He did not come to give people a doctrine, a truth or a teaching about the Fatherhood of God, as a theme or subject. He said. 'I *manifested*', or, for our purpose you could use the word: 'I *demonstrated*'. There is all the difference between a lecturer and a demonstrator! To 'manifest' is very practical; it is more than words or teaching, for it is showing in a living way the thing that you are desiring to have grasped and understood.

And so this matter of the Father God was manifested in a Person. The Person Himself was the manifestation. When you look at Him, listen to Him, watch Him, there is one deduction that you can, should and must draw: 'That is just what God is like.'

Whether it be with the little children, and His hands of blessing upon them, drawing them to Himself; or any of the many things that He did in healings, in comfortings, in restorings; or in any of the wonderful things that He said in parables, our conclusion should be: 'That is what God is like!' It is an expression of God as Father, and the Lord Jesus Himself is the manifestation of the Father.

Now, open that out and go right back to the beginning of history as the Bible gives it to us, and this conception is inherent in the very beginning. What was the conception with which the Bible opened, when God had completed His creative activities and got His man and the man's wife? It was a family. The *family* conception was there right at the very beginning, and in God's mind it was to be a family of His *own* children. He wanted a family of children 'after His own image and likeness', like *Himself*, and His heart was set upon this. There, at the beginning, He says: "Be fruitful, and multiply" (Genesis 1:22), and behind that is God's intention to have a family.

Do you notice that in the second phase of the Bible, that which we call the Patriarchs, it is the family which is the dominant, characteristic feature? 'Patriarch' is a Bible word, as you know, but do you know what it means?

It just means ‘the head of the family’. Perhaps you have not thought of that when considering Noah, Moses and Abraham and calling them by this high-sounding name ‘the Patriarchs’! But right through that long and very rich phase of the development of history in the Bible there lies, deeply embedded, this idea of the family. And in the patriarchal families it was not only the father who was the head of the household. The eldest son was also the priest of the family, in union with the father. Fathers and sons were the divine idea, and if you like to make it singular you can, for you are looking right ahead to John 17!

And when you move still further on in Bible history and come to that section of the Old Testament which has to do with the kings, the monarchy, have you been impressed with the fact that, when that phase reaches its highest point in David and Solomon, the very conception and idea of monarchy, government, dominion, reign, of a kingdom, lies with the father and son, David and Solomon? That was the peak of the monarchy. And if you look both into the Old Testament account and into the New Testament references to it, you will find that those words spoken by the Lord to David about his son, Solomon: “I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (2 Samuel 7:14), are taken up in the letter to the Hebrews and applied to the Lord Jesus. So God was looking *through* David and *through* Solomon — not just *at* them — to His own eternal thought of the family.

You come to the next and final section of the Old Testament, the Prophets. And what is the cry of the Prophets? For in this section there is a cry, a sob, a groan, an anguish, a travail, and, for the most part, that is the spirit of the Prophets. They are men with a burden, a cry, a heartache, men who are expressing a travail. Listen again to Isaiah 53!

But what is it all about? God has lost His family! The family of Israel has been broken up and disintegrated. It has gone away from God and from His house. God is deprived of that thing for which He first of all created men, and then inculcated into the whole of His dealings with them. In the Prophets God is seen to be in a state of disappointment and sorrow. Listen to Hosea, for instance. There is a cry of deep anguish in that prophet’s heart, and it all focuses upon this family conception.

Well, that has covered a lot of history, and there is more in it than that, but that is enough to show what was in God’s heart, what His heart had been set upon, what He had hidden, in a way, in His dealings with men and in His constitution of things. This was a hidden desire and purpose in the heart of God.

Then the Son of God comes. Now you go through your New Testament and tabulate the number of times ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ occur in connection with

God and the Lord Jesus. And then go on to the next step and tabulate the number of times that the Lord's people are referred to as His children, His sons, or as in a family relationship to Himself — 'begotten of God', 'born of God', and so on. It is very full and rich. We have only to mention it for a great deal just to come back to us and break upon us!

We said that the Son of God came from the Father: "I came forth from the Father" (John 16:27). And why? For one thing, to take up all that history from the creation, through the Patriarchs, through the monarchy, through the prophets, and gather to Himself the realization of this thing for His Father, in order to satisfy His Father. Dear friends, if you want to know what the Lord Jesus meant, and what it means where we are concerned when He said: "I came to do Thy will", it is this about which we are talking. The *will* of God is the family of God in which He is truly Father God, and His Son is truly *the* Son, the eldest Son, "The firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). Do you pray to know the will of God? Do you ask to know what God's will is? Well, of course, you may apply that to all sorts of things, but you must remember that the will of God is very comprehensive and specific, and it is just this that we are talking about. The Son came, not only to speak of the Father, but to manifest the Father, so that He could say: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). 'There is no further need for you to say "Shew us the Father" ' (John 14:8). "I manifested thy name ... I kept them in thy name." And, as we have seen, in this chapter alone He calls Him 'Father' six times — "O righteous Father ... Holy Father."

The Lord Jesus has come to give in His own Person the revelation of God as Father, and to redeem unto God His family. Those wonderful words in the early part of the Letter to the Hebrews: "He is not ashamed to call them brethren ... I and the children whom God hath given me ... Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling" (Hebrews 2:11,13; 3:1) are the fruit of His *redeeming* activity.

Dear friends, it is a good thing to be redeemed, to have what redemption means in the sense of sins forgiven, deliverance from bondage, security unto eternal life, and all those blessings. But do we sufficiently recognize that it is a *family* He has come to redeem, and that we are redeemed as a family? We may be redeemed individually, but God's thought, and Christ's thought, was to redeem a family.

What is a family? Now, if you friends have a family, how happy and pleased would you be if every one of your children was a unit in himself or herself, living an independent life without any concern or consideration or interest in any other member of the family? Just so many isolated units in one place could not be called a home! Would you be happy about it if they

all went off and never had any concern for the other members, but were just individuals? Well, they might be children of the same parents, but, if that was the situation, the parents would feel that the real meaning of parenthood had been lost. How God must feel about anything and everything that is other than a family concept and a family spirit among His people!

We hear so much about the Church, the churches and the local assemblies. Indeed, we can get very tired of that, for it can be so technical. But what is God's thought in companies of His people in any place? That they should be a representation of the family where His Fatherhood is the dominant thing, where His Son has the place that He ought to have, and where all are a unit. "I pray ... that they may all be one" (John 17:20-21). How? "As thou, *Father*, and *I* are one" (vv.21-22). The Father is revealing Himself in the Son and the Son is manifesting Himself in the Father. What perfect oneness there is between those two! "That they may be one, even as we are one."

The prayer of the Lord Jesus, right at the end, as He went to the Cross, was for the family. He went to the Cross to redeem the family, that out of His death and resurrection many sons should be born.

And there are some indications that there was a very real answer to His prayer at the beginning. You would never call those twelve disciples a family before Calvary! I should say: 'The Lord deliver us from families if that is one!' There was quarrelling, envying, striving and jealousy of one another. But look afterwards: "But Peter, standing up with the eleven" (Acts 2:14). And there is that wonderful second chapter of Acts when they "were all together in one place ... they had all things common ... and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own" (Acts 2:1, 4:32).

Well, we have reached something of the family when the Holy Spirit brings Christ into His place, and God is Father over all. Paul had some conception of this. You know that in his letter to the Ephesians he prayed to the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (3:14).

So the Lord Jesus came, firstly to secure unto the Father the satisfaction of His eternal desire, the realization of His own ambition of heart, to redeem unto God a family; and not to leave it there, but to bring that family to reign, to govern in the eternal kingdom. It is to be the governmental family of the ages to come. The means by which He is going to govern this world in the coming ages is by this family elevated to His throne. The far greater and more glorious counterpart of David and Solomon is the Father and Son. And then, to use another phrase from the Letter to the Hebrews, "many sons" whom He has brought to glory.

We cannot just say these things without reminding ourselves that the realization of this, both on the part of the Lord Jesus and on our part, if the

Father is to find His satisfaction, is a costly thing. It is by way of travail. There is no family without travail. God has put it in the very constitution of this creation that the family is by way of travail, of suffering. In a word, someone has to be prepared to lay down their life for the family, and the Lord Jesus did it. And, dear friends, we are not going to have anything like this among the Lord's people unless we are prepared to suffer for it, to lay down our lives for it, to set aside all our own personal interests for it, really to put up with a lot, that we might bring to the Father that upon which His heart is so much set. It is the way of travail, of sacrifice, of suffering. For this His Body was broken, that we might share that Body as one family. For this His Blood was shed, that we might, in drinking His blood — in other words, His outpoured life — share as a family that one life.

So we come back and close where we began, with His prayer. What a cry it is! What an appeal it is! Shall we say: what an agony it is! 'Father, the world has not known, but these have known ...'; 'Father, as thou and I are one ... that they may be one.'

Have you been all the time poised and adjusted, asking: 'Is the Lord saying something to me? Somewhere, somehow, I have violated this family spirit, family disposition, and grieved the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of the family.' Is there something that He is saying to you and to me? How does this apply to us? Is it just a lovely Bible theme? God forbid! It was a prayer with Him, so let us make it a prayer, and a prayer that will have a very practical aspect, for sometimes we can go a long way towards answering our own prayers. And this matter is not *all* to be left with the Lord. He has done His part!

DISCIPLESHIP IN THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST

CHAPTER ONE

THE REVELATION OF GOD AS FATHER

“Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I say unto you I speak not from Myself: but the Father abiding in Me doeth His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works’ sake” (John 14:8-11).

It must be remembered that the revelation of God reached fulness and finality in His Son. That is a definite statement at the beginning of the Letter to the Hebrews: “God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things” (Heb. 1:1,2). The fulness and the end of the revelation of God is in Jesus Christ, His Son.

In his Gospel John begins right back in the past eternity, and sees the Son there, and then he brings the Son out of eternity into time: “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Then you will notice how much there is in this Gospel about the future. Jesus is constantly speaking about afterwards: “In that day”, pointing on to that phase of His existence after He would leave this world. There is much about that eternal future in this Gospel.

So here we have the Son of God in three tenses — the past eternity, the present hour, and the eternity to come. The point is that God’s Son comprehends the whole of the eternities, and God’s full revelation from eternity to eternity is in His Son.

The words in the Gospel by John which take us right to the very heart of God are “Father” and “Son”. However much there may be about “life” in the Gospel — and there is a very great deal — and however much there may be about other things, the heart of everything is in these two words: ‘Father’ and ‘Son’. The name ‘Father’ occurs one hundred and sixteen times, which is more than any other subject in the Gospel. Just let that sink into you! The name ‘Father’ is mentioned one hundred and sixteen times in this Gospel. The word ‘Son’ is used thirty-seven times, but when ‘Father’ is mentioned it relates to the ‘Son’, so that, although the word ‘Son’ may not occur so frequently, ‘Father’ always relates to the ‘Son’. So you can say that in meaning ‘Son’ occurs one hundred and sixteen times.

Now, with this word the Lord Jesus brought an entire revolution into the world. His revelation of the Father was a complete revolution. The way in which Jesus revealed the Father had never been known in the world before. The Jews did not know Him like this. When you go back to the Old Testament and look to see what was the Jews’ conception of God, you find that it was very different. There is one word which sums up the whole of their idea of God. The Jewish idea of God was entirely gathered into the one word ‘holy’. He was to them ‘the holy one of Israel’. Perhaps you would be very impressed if you were to look to see how many times that title occurs in the Old Testament. He is called and known as ‘the Holy One of Israel’ right through the Old Testament. In the prophecies of Isaiah alone that title occurs twenty-nine times; and if that is in one prophet, how many times must it be in all the other books! God was the Holy One to Israel. He alone must be worshipped because He was the Holy One. Isaiah heard the voice of the seraphim crying: “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts” (Isa. 6:3), and that sums up the whole of Israel’s conception of God.

This is the primary doctrine of Judaism. The Hebrew word for ‘holy’ means ‘different’, ‘separate’, ‘one who is set apart from others’. A thing or person in the Old Testament was holy because it or he was different and set apart from all others. The priest was holy because he was supposed to be different from all the other men, and he stood apart from them. The temple was holy because it was different from all other buildings, and it was set apart from them. The Sabbath was holy because it was different from all other days, and it was set apart from them. God was holy because He was different from all other gods, and He was set apart from them all. This meant that unless a person was holy, God could not be approached by that person. This very holiness kept every unholy person away. It was very dangerous for an unholy person or an unholy thing to come near to God.

This was the consciousness of the people of Israel. You remember

Jacob after that night when the man wrestled with him? It says: “And there wrestled a man with him” (Gen. 32:24). (I think we had just better pause to get our minds straight on this matter. We have heard a lot about wrestling with God, and we base that idea upon Jacob at Peniel. But what the Bible says is that the man wrestled with Jacob. It was God who started this thing, and there was a very good reason for it where Jacob was concerned). But when ‘the man’ left him Jacob cried out in terror: “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Gen. 32:30). If he had seen God face to face his life would not have been preserved because he was Jacob. God came to him in another form.

Think again of Moses. In an interview between God and Moses, Moses said to God: ‘Show me Thy face’, and God answered: “Thou canst not see my face; for man shall not see me and live” (Ex. 33:20).

When the man who appeared to Gideon and wrought those wonders went away, Gideon cried out: “Alas, O Lord God! Forasmuch as I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die” (Judges 6:22,23).

Do you see what their idea of God was? His holiness made Him very terrible, and for an unholy being to come near Him meant death.

Then God was sovereign Lord, and He revealed Himself as sovereign Lord to Israel. We have one outstanding illustration of this, and into it is gathered the whole of the Old Testament. The Lord said to Jeremiah: “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words. Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he was making a work on the wheels. And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?” (Jer. 18:1-6). ‘Can I not do just as I like with Israel? Who will tell Me what I ought to do? Who will dictate to Me? I do as I like. I do as I please, and no one has any right to say: Why do you do that? or: Why do you do it in that way? I am Sovereign Lord and I keep My wisdom to Myself. You may not understand, but that is not the point. Whether you understand or do not understand, I know what I am doing.’

But, you know, this puts people in a very difficult situation. This sovereignty of God creates some real problems for us, for the fact of the matter is that we never know what God is going to do and what He will do next. He will usually do the thing that we never thought of, and will not explain Himself before He does it, or while He is doing it. We may have to wait a very long time before we get the explanation. God is just Sovereign Lord, and He keeps everything in His own hands and in His own wisdom, and explains Himself

to no man. That is the Old Testament idea of God — He is bound by nothing but His own holiness. For Israel this was a terrible truth.

And so we are led to this point: this holiness of God in the Old Testament is revealed as a terrible thing for sinners. The sinner is made to fear God because of His holiness. You know how true that is in the Old Testament. God is God the all-terrible for the sinner. That is the conception of God in Judaism: He is a holy God and it means death and destruction for anything unholy to come into His presence. With that you sum up your Old Testament and close it.

But let us turn from the Jewish idea of God to the idea in the Greek and Roman worlds. The disciples had not only to encounter the Jewish world, and their training was not only in relation to that world but they were also being trained to go out into the Greek and Roman worlds where they would meet other ideas about God. If you had moved in those worlds you would have found that they considered that the gods were very hostile people. No Greek or Roman had any confidence in his god, indeed, there was nothing but suspicion of the gods in their world. They entirely mistrusted them, and looked upon man as the victim of the gods. They were not at all concerned for man's well-being, but were his enemies. His interests were no concern of theirs. The fact was that they had to do anything and everything to try and appease the wrath of the gods. They had in some way to set aside their antagonism. They feared their gods, believed they were against their interests, and would do anything to get on even terms with them. Their gods were also unknowable gods. When Paul went to Athens he saw all those images to gods, all those altars, and written on one altar were the words: 'To the Unknown God'. They were gods who could not be known, and they were quite detached from men and not a bit interested in men's good. The great work of Satan from the beginning has always been to misrepresent God, to give man a false idea of Him, and to make him think of God as completely the reverse of what He is. That is particularly true in the pagan world.

Now you see what I meant when I said that when Jesus came He brought in a revolution in this matter. What a revolution was this word 'Father'! No, He was not going to put aside the holiness of God, but He was going to do something that made it possible for men to come into the presence of a holy God. We must leave that just for the present, but we will come to it later on.

Our point at the moment is the tremendous revolution that this word 'Father' on the lips of Jesus created. I wonder if you recognise that in this one word all the Gospel is summed up? What is the Gospel? It is the 'good news' — good news for Israel and good news for the pagan world. And the Gospel is all summed up in one word 'Father', as revealed in Jesus Christ.

But do you see what this name introduces? It introduces us to the great thought of God to have a family. That is the deepest thing in the heart and mind of God. Do you notice, that God took one whole section of the Bible in order to show this? The Old Testament is divided into three sections, the Patriarchs, the Kings and the Prophets, and the whole of that first section of the Patriarchs is taken up with this idea of God about the family. The word ‘Patriarch’ means the head of a father’s house, and the first section of the Bible is the section of the Patriarchs — heads of fathers’ houses — and in that section God has hidden His great eternal thought about a family. It would take us a long time just to study that, and I can only hint at it.

Abraham was called a “father of many (nations)” (Rom. 4:17) He was the originator of a family for God and you know of the teaching about him as the father. Even the Jews thought of him as father. They said to Jesus: “Our father is Abraham” (John 8:39). It is a pity they did not know what that meant from God’s standpoint!

And then from Abraham came the twelve tribes of Israel, through twelve sons. The whole nation was founded upon sonship out of a father. In type and in figure *one* father and a *family* of sons. And there is much more in that section of the Old Testament. God was working at that time upon this spiritual principle of a family.

But He went wider than Israel, for He said to Abraham: “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). It was a very big family that was in the mind of God.

So we see in the very first place that there was this idea and purpose in the mind of God to have a family of His own; that He should be Father, and that there should be a family whom He would call His children. The greatest tragedy and loss in history was the loss of God’s family. In a very real sense we have to say that God lost His family.

The Lord Jesus had a very great mind. He had in His mind comprehended the whole thought of His Father. He knew the thought of His Father from all eternity, and He put that whole thought into the simplest thing that He said. When Jesus says something you have eternity and the universe, and that is why we never get to the end of anything that He says. Some of us have been talking for more than fifty years about things that He said, and I have to confess to you that, after all that time, I am now seeing more in the simple things of Jesus than I ever saw before. There is no getting to the bottom of anything that Jesus said.

Take one of the most simple things that He said. I wonder what you would choose if I asked you what is the best-known thing that Jesus said! I think some of you would choose the Prodigal Son. Jesus knew what He meant

when He spoke that parable. He never called it the ‘Parable of the Prodigal Son’, or gave it any name, but if it were given its true name it would be ‘The Parable of a Father’s Love’.

Look at the situation. There is a happy family. The sons had lived with their father for years, until they reached manhood, and then one day something came in. It came into the mind of one of the sons, and the result of that was the break-up of that family. The family was broken and became scattered, not only geographically but spiritually. Discord had come in. But when at last the son who had gone away returned, what was it that Jesus made him say? The first word on his lips was ‘Father’ ... “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight” (Luke 15:21). What was the sin against heaven and in the father’s sight in the mind of Christ? Jesus knew what happened in the Garden. God had made a family possible, a very happy family, and then an evil thing, an evil thought, came in. The result? The family of God was broken, and the whole world throughout all history has been an exhibition of what happened then — a broken family. God had been robbed of that upon which His heart was set.

Look at the world today. I think there is no more false statement than that which calls the world ‘a family of nations’. That is wholly and utterly false to the state of things. There is no such thing in existence today as a family of nations! It is a broken family and is in a terrible state.

Jesus knew all that when He told the simple parable of the Prodigal. He made this man say, “I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight”, and the sin against heaven and against God is the sin against the family. It is indeed a sin. And so Christ in His parable set forth a very deep truth.

But do you notice what the New Testament says? It says that when things are getting near the end and judgment is about to come upon this world, one of the signs is the broken family. Paul writes about disobedience to parents; children against parents, parents against children — the family life broken up. This is one of the features of a state that is positively against God’s mind. And the New Testament says that when things get like that the judgment is very near.

In most parts of the world the situation is like this more than ever. Children have little or no respect for their parents. As for honouring father and mother, they don’t know anything about it! And it is working more and more the other way: parents are careless about their children. Family life is being rapidly lost in this world and the New Testament says that is a mark of the end and points to swift judgment coming. Oh, this great desire of God for a family! What a lot rests upon it!

Do remember that Satan is positively against the family. He will do

anything to break it up because it goes nearest to the heart of God. A true family is a representation of what God has eternally desired. This is not just legalism. It carries with it great eternal spiritual principles. The great heart of God is in this matter, so He brought back into this world that great conception of Father and family. You understand that I am not only speaking about natural families.

Jesus came to show us that the Jewish and pagan idea is not the kind of Father that we may have. We may draw near to Him without fear; we may know Him; and we may have fellowship with Him. He is only too anxious to come near and make Himself known and understood. If He has lost, He is not just going to wait until the thing comes back; He is going to search until He finds what is lost. Has God lost His family? "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). And the greatest thing that the Lord Jesus seeks and saves is the family.

This ought to revolutionise our idea about churches. You would think that God wants anything but families by the way people talk about churches! Companies of people who are built upon a technique, all kinds of laws and regulations, a certain set and fixed system and order. That is not a family! Every local company of the Lord's people ought to be a family, and all the Lord's people in the world ought to be a family. They really are a family, but they are not living as a family.

Yes, Jesus has brought in His own Person the revelation of God as Father.

THE LORD'S PEOPLE TO BE A REIGNING PEOPLE

In our last consideration we saw the world into which Jesus came, and the kind of mind there was in Israel and in the pagan world about God. When Jesus came using the word 'Father' about God, it was quite a revolution both in Israel and in the pagan world. Jesus was always talking about God as Father, and this was an altogether new idea. He made it clear that God was not a God of terror to be feared but a God of love to be loved. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19 AV). 'Father' is a name of love: "God so loved the world" (John 3:16). He loved the world with the love of a father. God was not far off; He had come very near in the Person of Jesus. God was not unknowable; He had made Himself known in the Person of Jesus. And while God was still a very holy God, Jesus came to give man a righteousness which made it possible for him to abide in the presence of God. What a tremendous change came in the situation with Jesus! We look at the Lord Jesus and we do not see One from whom we must run away in fear. He drew people to Himself; they wanted to come near to Him. He was not One who was shut up away from them. He came near and was always trying to make Himself known by them. And He said: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9b): 'I am really what God is like'.

We said that the Old Testament is divided into three main sections. The first is what we call the Patriarchs; the second is that of the Monarchy; and the third is that of the Prophets. And we have pointed out that the first section is concerned with the revelation of God's mind in that He wants a family. It was that which came into view when He said to the first man and wife: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28). That could have been put in other words: 'I want a family for Myself. I want this earth to be filled with a family like Myself'. So He made man after His own image and in His own likeness, and said 'I want a family like that'.

Well, we know what happened. He lost that family, and then He came down and took hold of one man. That man was Abraham, and he became known as the father of a new kind of being, or person, that is: "The father

of all them that believe” (Romans 4:11). If you look into the Letter to the Romans you will see how often Abraham is called ‘Father’. He was God’s new beginning for a family, and all through the Patriarchs God is making this family. There were the twelve sons of Israel, and through those twelve sons God was building up His family. We pointed out that the very word ‘Patriarch’ means ‘Father of a family’. So God wrote His thought deeply in the first section of the Bible, and all that section is occupied with this matter of revealing God’s desire to have a certain kind of family.

Now we are going to follow on into the second phase of the Old Testament. We have said that this section is occupied with the Monarchy, but what does that mean when you come to look into it. It does not just become a matter of so many individual kings. If you look into it very closely you will see that the thought of God is to have a *ruling* family. Israel was intended to be God’s ruling family on this earth. There was a historic sense in which God was Israel’s Father, not in the same sense in which He is our Father, but historically God was thought of as Israel’s Father. In the Book of Deuteronomy Moses says about God: “Is not he thy father that hath bought thee?” (Deut. 32:6). Isaiah, the prophet, speaking for Israel, says: “Thou art our Father, though Abraham knoweth us not” (Isaiah 63:16). In the next chapter he says: “Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter” (Isa. 64:8). There was a historic sense in which God was the Father of that nation. And everybody who knows the Old Testament knows quite well that God intended that nation to be the ruling nation: “The Lord will make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath” (Deut. 28:13). How true it was! When Israel was walking with God in truth, there was not a nation on this earth that could contend with them. See how all the nations in the land were subdued under their feet! And when the Monarchy reached its highest point in David, every nation was subdued under him. Israel was intended to be the ruling family among the nations.

But note this family principle. When the Monarchy reached its highest point in David, it was the principle of sonship which was uppermost.

Here is a strange thing. In the second book of Samuel it says: “When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee ... I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (2 Sam. 7:12-14). That looks as though it applied to Solomon: ‘When thou, David, shall sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee ... I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father and he shall be my son’. Well, what about these words in the first chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews? These very words are taken out of the Old Testament and applied to the Lord Jesus: “For unto which of the

angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" (Heb. 1:5). And "Of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; and the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom" (Heb. 1:8).

So, when the Spirit of God said those words to David many hundreds of years earlier, He had Jesus in mind, and David's really great Son is Jesus. 'I will be to him a Father and he shall be to me a Son, and I will establish His Kingdom for ever.' So the *ruling* family was God's idea.

Now you will have to be very patient while I work through all this, because you know that we always work toward something. We have something very good coming out soon. It was a very good thing that came out of the previous chapter — the wonderful revelation of God as Father. Now we proceed from that to see the wonderful revelation that the Lord's people are to be a reigning people.

But let us look back again into the Old Testament for our illustration. I think the story of Joseph is the best illustration of this thing. Here is this son of Jacob, and you know how he was sold by his brethren and then was sold again in Egypt. Then for a certain reason he was put in prison and had to sit in that dark, miserable place for thirteen years. But at the end of that time he was taken up and came to be the second one to the throne. Pharaoh said: "Only in the throne will I be greater than thou" (Gen. 41:40). Here is one who went through terrible, dark sufferings, but out of them he was raised to the throne and it was because God was in this business. It was God who raised Joseph to the throne. Why did He do it? Joseph tells us: it was to save the family of God. That family was in peril of death and Joseph said: "God did send me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5). And through Joseph coming to the throne that family of God came eventually to be the ruling nation.

Surely you can see the story of the Lord Jesus written in that? His own brethren after the flesh sent Him into suffering and death, but God raised Him and "made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority" (Ephesians 1:20). And the Apostle who said that about the Lord Jesus immediately went on to say this: "And raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). God's idea is that the family shall come where the Son is, to be the ruling family. And God wrote that truth in the whole life of the nation, and in everything to do with that nation and, as we have seen, in a special way in the story of Joseph.

All that is hidden in that great section of the Old Testament concerning the Monarchy. God chose a nation as His family to govern this world, but we know the tragedy of that nation. That is not true of Israel today. It is very much

the other way — they are in subjection to the nations. Why is that? Because they rejected the Son. Their destiny was bound up with the Son of God. They said: “We will not that this man reign over us” (Luke 19:14). And God said: ‘Very well, then, you shall not reign at all. If you refuse My Son His place as Lord, I refuse you as the reigning family.’ And so Israel was set aside as God’s reigning, or ruling, family. All history proves that to be true.

But do you think that God has given up His idea? Oh, no. He sent His Son into this world, and if Israel refused Him, there are others who will accept Him, and from the time that Jesus came there has been this family growing.

And we are a proof of that. We can say that we are just like one big family here. We come from about nine or ten different nationalities, and have quite a number of different languages, but we are a family. We have just one language and we all understand it — the language of heaven, the language of the Spirit. We have all been born in the same city and our names are written in the book of the citizens of that city. We are all born in the heavenly Jerusalem and our names are written in heaven. The Lord did not give up His idea because Israel refused it, but we will have to say more about that when we come to the third section.

Let us come back to this present truth. There are two aspects of this matter, the spiritual and the literal. What was it that the Lord Jesus was trying to teach these disciples? The same thing as He is trying to teach us, and that is how to have dominion spiritually. To use a phrase from Paul: how to “reign in life” (Rom. 5:17). That is the school we are in, and we are in it every hour of our life. We are up against spiritual enemies and all sorts of things that are against our spiritual life. There are evil forces out to destroy our spiritual life, and it is not an easy thing to live the life of God in this way. But the Lord is seeking to teach us to “reign in life” in a spiritual way. He has said: “In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). ‘Everything will be against you, but because I have overcome you shall overcome.’

That is the school of discipleship. Every day, and perhaps every night, we have to learn how to have victory in Christ, how to “reign in life” by this one Man, Jesus Christ, and how to live on the basis of a life which is greater than the power of this world. So the word is: “Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

This is not a lesson that we learn in one day. It is a lesson that is spread over our whole life. Sometimes we fail. Sometimes we are defeated. Oh, yes, we have been defeated many times. We will all confess that. There is no one who would say: ‘I have never been defeated yet’. But here is the Word of God about His own children: “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down”

(Ps. 37:24), and we may fall many times, but the wonderful thing about a child of God is that he or she does not often stay down. The victorious life that is in them brings them up again. And we are learning how not to be defeated.

We are in this school now. It is a hard school. But why are we at school with Christ? Because of the literal aspect of this. You see, afterwards His people are to reign with Him literally. The apostle says: "If we endure, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12). To His disciples the Lord Jesus said: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). What is the Kingdom? Well, it is just reigning with Christ, and we are going to reign with Him afterwards. These evil forces which now govern the world are going to be completely destroyed. The evil government of this world is going to be removed for ever, but someone has to govern the world, and that someone is Christ and His family. We are called to a Kingdom. To the church at Laodicea the Lord said: "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:21). So the school of discipleship in which we are is the school in which we learn to "reign in life" spiritually now so that we may reign hereafter literally.

You see, Jesus came into this world, and in doing so He took up this thought of God. First of all He had to learn how to reign spiritually, and there is a sense in which the very cross of the Lord Jesus was His throne. It is by His cross that He has come to govern this world spiritually. The disciples went everywhere preaching 'Christ crucified', and men and evil powers went down before that message. They preached 'Jesus Christ is Lord', and what tremendous things happened in this world! Jesus Himself learned to reign in a spiritual way. It was a spiritual education first, and then afterwards "God highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9). And the word is: "He must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). And then He will come to set up His Kingdom, and the crucified Lamb of God will be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And we are called to be with Him in that! That is the meaning of our present training as disciples.

So Jesus came to reveal God's mind about a family and that that family should be a ruling family. Oh, I do wish that we did this sort of thing better every day! I wish that we did rule more and that we were better overcomers! But perhaps we are learning a lot as we go on, and in many matters we are not so easily defeated today as we used to be.

God grant that our education may be perfect in this so that when He comes to reign He will find a family ready to reign with Him.

Well, that is where we will leave it now. You see why Jesus came into this world: to take up this eternal thought and desire of God to have a family,

and so far as “a great multitude which no man could number” (Rev. 7:9) are concerned, He did not come in vain. It will take us all eternity to get to know our brothers and sisters! It is such a tremendous family that He has been getting and is still getting.

But while that is a very blessed truth, and we thank the Lord that we are already in that family, let us remember that this family is at school. It has to learn how to reign. In a thousand things and in a thousand ways we have to learn how to reign so that when He comes to reign, we may be ready to reign with Him. That is what He came for, and, thank God, the purpose of His coming has been largely a success! May it be more so where we are concerned!

Now you see just where you are and what every day of your life means. It is related to the ages to come. Learning to reign together with Him! This is first of all a spiritual matter, but later on it will be a literal matter.

May this come home to our hearts! This is the Father’s desire and Jesus is “bringing many sons unto glory” (Heb. 2:10). It will be the glory of His Kingdom, the glory of His reign, when we shall reign together with Him if we have suffered together with Him.

THE REDEEMING OF GOD'S FAMILY OUT OF THE NATIONS

Reading: Isaiah 52:13–53:23.

We are occupied at this time with the question: What did Jesus Christ come into this world to bring in His own Person? We have spent quite a long time answering that question along one line — that He came to reveal in His own Person the meaning of eternal life, and we have now begun to consider the matter along another line — that He came to reveal in His own Person God as Father. He said: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9): “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30): “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” (John 14:10).

Thus He claimed to have come to reveal in His own Person God as Father, and we have seen what a revolutionary thing this was in Israel. It was on this very plane that they crucified Him. They said He was “making himself equal with God” (John 5:18), and so they put Him to death. They could not accept this revolutionary conception that God had come in the Person of His Son to reveal Himself in these terms.

We divided the Old Testament into three main sections and have covered the first two: the Patriarchs and the Kings. Now we have come to the third section, that is, the section of the Prophets.

What do we find when we come to this section? This representative family which had reached such a high point in the days of David and Solomon was now broken down, and the whole family had disintegrated. That began when the tribes of Israel divided into two main sections, and that division went on and on, continually becoming more and more, until it came to the point where the whole family was scattered and was found in captivity in Babylon and Chaldea. They were no longer like a family. That whole thing had been destroyed and spoilt.

What was the work of the prophets? Well, if you take Isaiah as a representative prophet, one who represents the other prophets, you find that in

the second half of his prophecies he is occupied with one thing, and that is the re-gathering of the scattered family. Everything that he has to say in the second half of this book has to do with this redemption of the lost family, and it is in that that Isaiah 53 stands — the redemption of the lost family.

But if you look at Isaiah you will see another thing. It is not just the redemption of Israel, for a much bigger family comes into view here. Israel was only a type of what God meant from the beginning. He meant to have a much bigger family than Israel. Israel was His object lesson and the instrument of teaching His thoughts to the world. God never *meant* Israel to be an exclusive people or to be the beginning and the end in themselves. That was their sin and their crime. They lost everything when they became exclusive, when they looked upon all other peoples with contempt and when they said: ‘We are *the* people. God begins with us and ends with us. All other people are dogs.’ That was their name for the Gentiles, and the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. That exclusiveness cost them everything, because God had only raised them up to be the teacher of the nations as to His own thought, and He had a much bigger thought about the family than Israel.

I am having to take for granted that you know about the prophecies of Isaiah and how they have a message for the nations. But now Isaiah brings into view this message: not only is Israel scattered and broken as a family, but that is true of the whole human race. It cannot rightly be called the human family as it is. No one looking at the state of the world today can speak about the nations being one big family. If there is any truth whatever in that word, it is a very broken-up family. Certainly this world is not living on the basis of God’s thought that He is Father and that they are the children, and this is one glorious family. No, no one believes that about the world today.

Well, what are we going to do about it? What will *God* do about it? He is going to redeem a family unto Himself. Now, there is first of all the fact, and then there is the method.

The fact is stated in some words in the book of the Acts: “Simeon hath rehearsed how first God did visit the nations (Greek; Gentiles, ASV) to take out of them a people for his name” (Acts 15:14). Note exactly what it says: ‘God hath visited the nations to take out of them a people for His name’. It does not say here: ‘God visited Israel’, but ‘God visited the nations’, because there in the nations God knew that there was a people that He could have for His name. What name? ‘Father’. That is the answer: ‘A people for His name’. Jesus in His great prayer said: “I made known unto them thy name” (John 17:26); and up to that prayer He had been constantly (one hundred and sixteen times) calling God ‘Father’. “To take out of the nations a people for his name”.

Now note the next thing that is said here: “And to this agree the words of the prophets” (Acts 15:15). So the prophets did have something to say about the nations, and God’s family in the nations! Here is the fact. God has a people in the nations, and the first thing He has to do is to take out of the nations a people for His name. You notice what it says — ‘First’. That is the *first* thing in this dispensation. It is *the* thing which marks the dispensation in which we are living. We are not talking about what God may do afterwards. This is the dispensation in which God is doing the first thing, and that is to take out of the nations a people for His name. He is getting His family. The difference of language and of nationality makes no difference to us. So far as we are concerned, God has taken out of the nations a people for His name. But we are only a small representation of something that He is doing on a very much larger scale. Some of us have travelled around this world and have gone to many countries and nations, and when we go there we never have to be introduced to the Christians as Christians. Before anybody can say to us: ‘This is a Christian’, we know it. There is something about a true child of God that another child of God recognises. In the natural world you can usually recognise a family by some family characteristic: you are more or less able to say of a person: ‘I know what family you belong to’ — that is, if you know the family. Well, that is true in the spiritual sense. You know when you meet another child of God without being told. There is a family likeness, and they all speak the same spiritual language. God is taking out of the nations a people for His name.

What about the method? If the fact is important, then the method certainly is. That brings us to Isaiah 53, and all that that great prophetic chapter embodies of New Testament truth. The method of governing this family is through the travail of the Son of God. You notice what it says here? “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days ... he shall see of the travail of his soul” (v. 10,11). It is through the suffering, death and resurrection of God’s Son that this family has been brought into being. This is the teaching of the Bible. God has opened our eyes to see Jesus Christ as the Saviour, the Redeemer of men. He has made us know that we need a Saviour and a Redeemer, and we have accepted Him as that. It has had a tremendous effect in our lives, and the very first thing that happened after we accepted the Lord Jesus as Saviour and Redeemer was that there came into our hearts and through our lips a new word. If we had ever thought or spoken of God before we called Him ‘God’, or ‘the great First Cause’, or some such far-away title, but when this thing happened in us and we took the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer, our first word in prayer was ‘Father’.

We came to know what the apostle Paul meant when he said: “The Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16). The family spirit was immediately found in us in a new way, and from that day to this God has been ‘Father’ to us, with all that that marvellous name means — not the Jewish idea of God, who is so holy that you can never come near to Him, for if you do you will die, nor the pagan idea of God, that is, of gods who are against you and you have to do everything to try and get on even terms with them. No, the true children of God are those who know that He is very near, that He has a very real concern for our interests, that He has a great love for us, that He is on our side, not against us, and much more than that. And that is what came into this world in the Person of Jesus Christ.

I wonder if you have noticed that in this connection a word is repeatedly used which has never been translated and never will be. It says in one place: “God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). A lot of people think that that is only the same word in two languages. In English, or German, or French, you say ‘Father’, so perhaps in Hebrew or in Arabic you say ‘Abba’. It is the same thing in two languages. But, no, it is not. Why have the translators put that word ‘Abba’ in at all? Why were they not satisfied that ‘Father’ was enough? Because the translators were scholarly men and they knew better. There is something in this name ‘Abba’ which cannot be expressed in the simple word ‘Father’. That word has never yet been translated, because you cannot translate it. If you gave it its literal meaning you could not use it of God. Let me try to illustrate.

I am getting old now and my family is grown up, but supposing, when they were very small children, my little boy had come to me and said: ‘Oh, thou great preacher! Oh, thou Bible conference speaker! Oh, thou organiser of Christian work! May I be allowed to talk to you?’ How do you think I would have felt? Well, to begin with, I would have felt that he had lost the whole idea of what I am. He might have said: ‘Father, may I speak to you?’, but, you know, that still sounds a bit formal. What did he say? ‘*Daddy*’ — ‘Daddy, can I say something to you?’ And that is the meaning of ‘Abba’. You cannot put it like that to God, but it is in the Bible meaning that we are God’s little children. God may be a very great Father, but He is not so great as not to love us to come to Him just as little children. You see, we could not say ‘Daddy’ to God, but that is the meaning of ‘Abba’. It is the word of a little child. That gives a very beautiful idea of the relationship between God and His children.

The New Testament has a lot about that. It has phrases like ‘little children’. Read the letters of John and you will find that he is constantly speaking to us as ‘little children’. And Jesus said: “Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3).

How do we get into this family? That great Jewish teacher named Nicodemus came to Jesus one night. He wanted to discuss this matter of the Kingdom of God, and he said to Jesus: “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God” (John 3:2). That is a very polite and courteous introduction, but Jesus knew what he had come about — to discuss this thing that all Jews were interested in. There was one big question going round Jerusalem: ‘This Jesus claims to be the Messiah, and when Messiah comes He will set up the Kingdom of God’. So, in effect, Nicodemus said: ‘I want to discuss with you this matter of the Kingdom of God. You claim to be the Messiah and that would mean that you are going to bring in the Kingdom of God. Now, I am very interested in the Kingdom of God. All Jews are. And I want to be in it.’ That is what it amounted to. Did Jesus discuss the Kingdom of God with him at first? The first thing that He said to this man was: “You must be born again”. Nicodemus said: “How can a man be born when he is old?” and Jesus said: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew” (John 3:4,6,7). That is the only way in. It is the way into the family, and this family is comprised of those who know the meaning of being born again, the miracle of new birth.

That is the most elementary truth to most of us. but it is always wise to emphasize the foundation. It is possible that someone has not yet come in through that door. And Jesus says to us all: ‘If you would be in the Kingdom of God’ — which is another word for ‘family of God’ — ‘you must be born again. You must be born of the Spirit of God. There is no other way in’. And the foundation is that Jesus Himself has come to remove everything that hinders us from going in. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed ... the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all ... thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed ...” (v.5-6,10): His family! — “He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied” (v.11). You know that that word ‘travail’ links on with the matter of children; the true children of God are the fruit of the travail of His Son, Jesus Christ.

God is still at work to redeem a family for Himself out of the nations, and we are very glad that we can say that we are in the family. We know what it means really to have God, not as God all-mighty or all-terrible, but as “Our Father who art in heaven” (Matt. 6:9).

THE REVELATION OF GOD CONCERNING MAN

Reading: Hebrews 2:1-3:1.

We are now going on to another revelation which came in the Person of Jesus Christ, that is, the revelation concerning man. It was a very wonderful revelation!

It is true to say that in all the philosophies of all the ages man is the central object of attention and interest. Even the idea of God, whether in the Hebrews, in the pagans, or in the Christians is only of interest as it relates to man. No one has ever been interested in God other than in so far as He might in some way relate to man. Man has been the centre of interest. The questions asked are: 'What is man?' 'Where did man come from?' 'Where is he going?' 'Has he a future after this life?' 'What is he in this world for?', and many other questions like that. They are all gathered round this kind of being called man. Man looms up so large in the universe that everything is made to serve him, and must give him attention. That is true in the Old Testament, which was the Bible of the Hebrews; it is true of the philosophies of the pagans; and it is very true in Christianity.

But there is another thing about this; in all these philosophies there is invariably a contradiction. On the one side it is the greatness of man. What a great and wonderful creature man is! What a lot has been made about this wonderful thing called man! But right alongside of that, on the other side, is the depravity of man. What a sinful creature man is! And the strange thing is that the people who have made so much of the greatness of man have also made so much of his depravity. That contradiction is the very part of the whole great question with which we are going to deal.

Look at this contradiction in the Old Testament! It is there that those words which we have read in the New Testament occur: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? ... Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet" (Ps. 8:4,6). Do you know who said that? It was David.

And what else did he say about man? “I am a worm, and no man” (Ps. 22:6). What a poor picture we have of man in the Psalms! Poor David, who said these wonderful words about man, was the one who said the worst things about him. He said: “My sin is ever before me” (Ps. 51:3). Here you have the contradiction, and the Old Testament is full of that. On the one side, man made in the image and likeness of God and made to have dominion over the works of His hands, and, on the other side, this terrible revelation that we have of the sinful depravity of man.

And this is a problem which is startling and bewildering men today. This contradiction is in the very constitution of mankind.

I suppose that in the last twenty-five years the greatness of man has been revealed more than in all the centuries before — and we could make it a much shorter period than that. Just think of what has happened in the last year or two! All this scientific discovery, invention and application; visiting other planets and the sending of mechanical bodies far out into space. Even while we are sitting here, round and round the earth they go, sending back their reports and giving information to men. Why, it makes our heads ache to think about it! What a revelation of the greatness of this creature called man! And it goes on and on. We are all wondering what things will be like in ten years if they go on at this pace! I don’t think I shall be here, but some of you will be taking your summer holiday on the moon! Here is a revelation of the greatness of this thing that God called man, and we are all amazed at it.

But what about the other side? What is the verdict of two world wars? Is it not the verdict of the most awful, terrible and horrible things that man can do? We don’t want to speak of it in a gathering like this, but there has been an uncovering of a depth of iniquity in man such as the world has never known. You know what I am talking about! And since the last war our daily papers are just full of crime, and it is not the old-fashioned kind of crime — it is scientific crime. All the latest discoveries and inventions of this clever man are being turned to crime. With all the wonders of this man, many of us are wondering how much longer it will be possible for us to live on this earth. Men are becoming afraid of life and are coming to feel that this world is getting an impossible place in which to live.

This is the great contradiction: a great and wonderful creation, and a terribly sinful creation. That is the problem which the Son of God came into this world to solve.

What has Jesus to say to all this? The contradiction meets in His own Person. I do not mean that He is a contradiction, for there is no contradiction in Him, but this great contradiction converged upon Him and met in Him, and it was His great mission to this world to solve that problem. His coming,

His teaching, His works, His death all point to the greatness of man in God's thought. On the other hand, they all point to the depravity of man. If man was not worth something, the Son of God would never have come into this world; but, on the other hand, if man did not need salvation, He would never have come into this world. The basic doctrine of Christianity is the incarnation, that is, God manifest in the flesh. "God was in Christ", says the Word, "reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19); and when the Son of God came into this world He called man to Himself. It was man He called to Himself, and He laid great demands upon him. Listen to this: "Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Well, that is a tremendous demand to put on man.

What tremendous promises He gave to man! Think again of the great Christian revelation concerning man's eternal destiny: "Bringing many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:10); and again: "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17).

You remember that when they were stoning Stephen, just as his spirit was about to pass to the Lord he looked up and said: "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). The Son of *man*! We know that Jesus took that title because it was His intention to bring man where He would be. Jesus in glory is the representative of all those whom He is going to bring to glory. What a tremendous prospect for man! Yes, the Son of God came to get man.

But then you have to put alongside of that this tremendous revelation of man which Jesus gave, and what a revelation that was! We have already seen what man was like in His eyes. He said: "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Man had gone astray and was lost — yes, this wonderful man! How true are the words of the prophet Isaiah: "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6); and Jesus took up those words in His parable of the lost sheep. He looked upon man as lost sheep and said: "Other sheep I have ... them also I must bring" (John 10:16). Do you remember His parable of the ninety-nine and the one lost sheep? Don't make a mistake when you read that parable. Jesus was not saying that ninety-nine were not lost and only one was, but that ninety-nine *thought* they were not lost, but they were just as lost as that other one. The one was really the representative of all the others in a spiritual condition. If Jesus was referring to the Jews, He was saying: 'The Jews are very much *more* lost, as a matter of fact, than this one which has gone astray.' In the eyes of Jesus man as a whole was and is lost.

Again, in the eyes of Jesus, man was lame to the point of absolute helplessness. We saw that in the sign of the man at the Pool of Bethesda. He had been lying on that bed all his life, utterly helpless, and in healing him Jesus

was only saying in effect: 'This is the state of all men. No man can really walk before God and be pleasing unto Him. Every man is hopelessly and helplessly lame spiritually.' That is how Jesus looked upon man.

Then, again, in the eyes of Jesus man was blind and without the faculty of sight. We saw that in the sign of the man born blind, and Jesus applied it to the state of all men.

And, again, in the eyes of Jesus man had no invisible means of support. We are, of course, back with the feeding of the five thousand. Neither Philip nor Andrew knew where the bread was coming from, but there was an invisible source of supply. The five thousand did not know where that was, nor did the disciples, but Jesus did. In that sign He was only saying: 'All men are without that invisible source of supply.' That is how Jesus looked at men.

But He went further than that. He said: 'Man is dead.' In the eyes of God all men are dead, that is, spiritually without life, and Jesus showed that the very best type of man here in this creation has to be born again. He has to go right back to the beginning and start life all over again. That is the meaning of the interview with Nicodemus.

Now, you see, the whole teaching and work of Jesus was set over against that condition of man. It was set over against man's sin, his helplessness and hopelessness. His teachings and His works were against all that. The ordinary people drew out His sympathy, not because they were better than any others, but because they knew how much they needed God. They drew out His compassion: "He ... saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd" (Mark 6:34), but the important, religious people drew out His anger. Oh, hear how strongly and hotly He spoke against them! But all men were sinners and those who knew it found His compassion. Those who did not believe that they were sinners brought out His wrath. But whether it be compassion or whether it be anger, it was all because of sin. His anger and His compassion were because of man's condition.

So let us say this again: the coming, the living, the working and, most of all, the dying of the Lord Jesus were to redeem man, to recover man from this lost condition and bring him to the place to which God always intended him to come.

It is man's sin that makes this great contradiction. There is no doubt about it that this man that God has made is a great man, even in his sinfulness. Mankind is the crown of all God's creation. When God had made man He rested from His work and, in effect, He said: 'I have reached the end of all My activities. Man is the crown of all My work. Now I have man I can take My rest'.

Yes, man is a very great creation, but there is this terrible contradiction, and Jesus came to remove that. We have said that it is sin that makes the contradiction. What a wonderful creature man would be if he were not a sinner, and what a wonderful world this would be! Jesus came to take away that contradiction: “Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). He took away that thing which made the contradiction, for it is man’s sin that ruins his greatness. Oh, what a wonderful creature he will be when his sin is all gone! We have to say today: ‘Yes, he is very clever, *but ...*’; ‘It is all very wonderful, *but ...*’; and we have to add ‘but it is very dangerous’. We cannot go all out with our heart and say: ‘It is all good’. However great it is, we cannot say: ‘It is all good’. Indeed, we are becoming afraid of man’s greatness, and man is becoming afraid of it. Oh, what a lot they are trying to do to set aside the things that they have discovered, and if only they had confidence in one another they would do it. But there is no confidence in human nature; that is just the contradiction.

There is no contradiction in Jesus Christ because there was no sin in Him. He said: “Which of you convicteth me of sin?” (John 8:46), and they were all silent; they had nothing to say. Jesus was not two men, a good man and a bad man together. He was wholly good, and therefore God glorified Him. He was able to do so because there was no sin in Him, and God can never glorify anyone or anything where there is sin.

Now the Lord Jesus came into this world to remove sin from man so that he could be glorified by God.

We know that Jesus has taken away our sin and we are on the road to glory. Glory is our destiny and we have just a little evidence of that. We say: ‘It is a glorious thing to be saved! It is a glorious thing to know Jesus Christ as Saviour! It is a glorious thing to know that our sins are forgiven and that God has put them away behind His back, never to remember them again!’ That is not only a glorious doctrine — it is a glorious Gospel! It is a touch of glory, but we have other touches as well.

Here we come up from all parts of this sinful, troubled world, to the mountain and we have a week or ten days of blessed fellowship together. I hope you are able to say, as I can: ‘This is a glorious thing!’ We are perfectly sympathetic with Peter on the mountain top: “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles” (Mark 9:5). ‘Why must we go down there to London again, or to Zurich, or to some other place? Why can’t we stay here?’ That is just a little touch of glory.

But what will it be like when sin has gone right out of creation altogether, and we are all together with the Lord where sin is no more, where there are no more contradictions, and when our fellowship will be perfect? Yes, that

will be glory, and that is what we were created for, but we lost it in the sin of Adam. And that is what Jesus came to bring back; to redeem us from all iniquity, and to bring us to glory.

Now these words which we have read in Hebrews, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Heb. 2:3), surely take on a new meaning in the light of what we have been saying. So great salvation! Most people think of heaven as that which saves them from something, and it is, of course, a great salvation to be saved from sin, from judgment, from perdition, but it is a far greater salvation to be saved unto glory! Oh, the “so great salvation” refers to the wonderful destiny that we have through Christ Jesus, that is why this apostle cries from his heart. In this Letter he is saying what a great salvation we have in Christ, but if you read it again you will see that it is nearly all about what we are saved unto. He says something of what we are saved from, but nearly the whole of the Letter is taken up with what we are saved unto. The “so great salvation” is that which Christ has come to bring us into, not only what He has come to get us out of.

If all this is true, what a valuable thing a soul must be in the sight of God! Perhaps you and I find it the most difficult thing to believe that we are of any value. Well, that is quite true, but for Christ, and God puts an infinite value upon a soul in Christ. Oh, how valuable man in Christ is to God! Therefore the salvation of a soul is a very costly thing. The apostle says: “Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold ... but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish” (1 Peter 1:18) — the very cost of the life of the Son of God. It is a very costly thing to save a soul, but in God’s sight a soul is something for which it is worth making a great sacrifice. When the merchantman, looking for goodly pearls, finds one of great price, he goes and sells all that he has that he may have that pearl, and in that parable Jesus was teaching the value of souls. He is the One who is seeking, and in this creation He has seen those whom He wants for Himself. He wants men more than anything else, and He has let go of the glory of heaven in order to come down and find them.

This will not make us proud or self-important, but very humble: “God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). How valuable a soul is to God! Yes, man is great in the sight of God, but his greatest greatness is when he is redeemed from his sin, and Jesus came especially for that.

But, of course, if it is important for a soul to be saved, it is very important that he should go on to full glory. So the New Testament is just full of that — “Let us ... press on unto full growth” (Heb. 6:1 RV margin), and, as we have read: “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling”

(Heb. 3:1). We are called to the glory of God in Jesus Christ, and that is the value that God sets upon man.

We must think about it and let this message work in our hearts. We must say: 'If God wants me like that, if He wants to do that with me, if He wants to have me like His Son, then He must have me altogether and He shall.'

May that be the result of this message — that the Lord has all that He came to get in every one of us.

The purpose of this publication is to encourage God's people to lay hold on eternal life, the hope set before them, knowing that Jesus Christ, their Saviour, will soon return to establish His eternal Kingdom, "so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:12).

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