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Golden
Candlestick

**A KINGDOM THAT CANNOT
BE SHAKEN**

T. Austin-Sparks

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A KINGDOM THAT CANNOT BE SHAKEN

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THE ETERNAL PATTERN OF THE KINGDOM

"For not unto angels did He subject the world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb. 2:5).

"But we behold Him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9).

"... and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5).

"Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken ..." (Heb. 12:28).

Just by way of a preliminary word, let me say that it is not our thought to embark upon an exposition of the letter to the Hebrews. Our object is not to note what any particular part of the Scripture teaches or contains, but rather to know what God has revealed for the time in which we are living. That will be found in all the Scriptures, but this letter does contain a peculiarly comprehensive presentation of that revelation of God. As you well know, it covers the Scriptures almost entirely from before creation, to and through creation, and on through the Old Testament it moves and takes up the gospels, embraces the writings of the apostle Paul, and moves to the great consummation of the kingdom which is coming. It is, therefore, very comprehensive, and it brings to us in a concise way God's mind from eternity as centred in the people whom he is gathering out of the nations in our own dispensation.

These three fragments which we have read, and making them

more fragmentary than in the text, do gather up into themselves not only all that this letter is about in itself, but all that God's revelation is about.

"Not unto angels did He subject the inhabited earth to come".

"But we behold Him ...".

"The powers of the coming age".

"Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken".

I want to say just here for the moment — it will occupy us more fully perhaps later — that "receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken" is a present active thing. It is not that we are going to receive a kingdom; we are now in the process of receiving the kingdom which cannot be shaken. That is actually the sense and meaning of the word.

The inhabited earth to come — the powers of a coming age — receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken — that is the thing in view, that is what it is all about. You have to move into all the details of this letter with that always as the object. Why this and this and this? — because of that. It is all pointing to that, it all has to do with that. What is the meaning of all this other? Well, that is the meaning of it. It has to do with an age, a kingdom, which cannot be shaken, the inhabited earth to come. So you go back to the beginning of the letter, and you can understand that great first part, the introduction of the Son.

The prospect

But look at these three fragments again just to get their connection. Firstly, a coming kingdom. Then, the earnest of that coming kingdom: "have tasted of the powers of the age to come". Then, a present receiving of that kingdom. It is coming in now, and we are supposed to be coming into it now with all that it means as to its nature.

Christ God's eternal pattern

So the first section of the letter presents us with the eternal pattern of that kingdom, of that age to come. The eternal pattern is declared right at the outset, and we find the pattern to be a Person. It is very important for us to get a right approach and right standpoint in this matter of Christ as the Pattern-Person of the kingdom, of the age to come: as the "Person-Pattern" of the coming age. Christ did not come because other people failed. A lot of people are mentioned here. Adam failed, Moses failed, Aaron failed, Joshua failed, Israel failed, and so Christ came — not at all! That is the wrong standpoint, the wrong approach. If they had never failed, He would have come. He was eternally appointed and destined to be this pattern of God's kingdom, of what things would be when God had them according to His mind. He is not just an emergency provision. A difference, of course, obtains.

If Adam had not failed, then some might say Christ would have been unnecessary — not at all. If Adam had not failed, if he had triumphed right through in all divine intention, Christ would have been necessary to be the crown of that work. Adam's failure simply brought God's original thought in and in Christ God says, Yes, man may fail, but My first thought does not fail, My Man does not fail. The point is that, whether man failed or did not fail, Christ was there already as God's pattern for things, and everything was determined and destined to take its character from the Son. Man, even without failure, would have simply come to the pattern of Christ, and Christ would have been the head, the crown, the measure, the stature, the fulness, even for unfallen man. Do not let us be mistaken about this, that Adam failed, therefore Christ; all these others failed, men and things, therefore Christ. No! God is building upon a rock which could not fail from eternity. God's foundation stands outside of time, God's pattern stands altogether apart from the exigencies of creation. It is the eternity of God's thought and intention which is our absolute assurance. If for one moment we allow what has come into time, that which we know of man, of ourselves, to be a

governing thing, we are on sand. If our feet are upon something that goes far back beyond what happened in time, we are on rock, and I would like very much to stay and just leave the whole thing and talk about rock, for I am quite sure that what the Lord's people need to do perhaps more than anything else is to understand their Rock. There is an awful shaking going on, and the individual Christian is knowing that shaking. We get a terrible knocking about and buffeting over our faith, yes, even over our standing. This terrible Accuser never ceases to try and bring us back into questions, uncertainties and weakness as to our position with God and as to God's attitude towards us. Perhaps you know something of that; it is true. We need to know the nature, the comprehensiveness of our Rock, Christ Jesus.

It is not only the Person, as we are going to see. We have used this phrase — the Pattern is a Person and the Person is the Pattern; that is a whole range of things gathered into Christ, as this letter unfolds; a whole range of things, the whole question of righteousness, everything is gathered into Him. He becomes our Rock in the sense that everything that we need for an eternal realization of God's purpose is in such an one as He is. And He has not just come in because things have gone wrong; He was there before ever anything went wrong at all, and God is not just repairing. God has His perfect, complete and final work in His Son. There is no doubt and no room for any question at all as to whether God is going to succeed, because He has. Here this little fragment about the tasting of the powers of the age to come is that, when the Holy Spirit is with us, we have the earnest of that coming age, it will all be like that. So let us get our approach right.

Christ no mere emergency measure

I wonder if you have grasped what I have been trying to say? I think most people do make that wrong approach and have that wrong standpoint. Everything has gone wrong, Adam has gone wrong and all these things and all these men have failed, and things

are failing now, and therefore God must bring in some emergency measure to put that right. Not at all; Christ is no mere emergency measure. Christ is there before the emergency arose, He is God's pattern from eternity. Christ's coming in deals with the conditions which have come about, it is quite true, but that is only God's way of securing what He originally established as His intention. That is just the line that comes down and goes up again to pick things up. God's thought goes on without a bend downward at all, God's mind is established from eternity to eternity. Christ transcended men and Christ transcended all the things. Did everything become involved in Adam? Was Adam final? No, Adam himself was only a pattern of Him that was to come (Rom. 5:14). He *was* to come, Adam was only a pattern of Him that was to come. You are all prepared to say that the tabernacle in the wilderness is not it, it is only a pattern of heavenly things. So was Adam — he was not *it* any more than the tabernacle was *it*; Christ is the reality before and over Adam. Adam fails; Christ never fails. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). That is the message here. Yes, the things failed, but, fail or not fail, they are only a pattern. Christ is essential, He transcends them. They have failed; it does not make any difference, this letter says. You do not throw up your hands in despair because Adam failed, because Moses failed, Aaron failed, Israel failed, the tabernacle failed — all failure. No, they are only patterns, and whether they fail or they do not fail, Christ is there over and above all. But, as I said earlier, He would have come in any case. He has come to redeem, but had redemption not been necessary, He would have come to crown, to be the crown of all. Well, the men and the things were only signs, after all.

Christ an eternal necessity

There is a very deep question — it may seem like a theological question — involved in what I have said. It is not just some abstruse or profound thing. If Adam had not failed, where would he have arrived? Would he have arrived at deity? Would there have

been a deifying of humanity? Never! It raises the whole question of the person of Christ as very God, and God is to be all and in all ultimately. He is to be the crown of His creation. Man, even unfailing man, can never of himself come to God's thoughts. Oh, how much is involved in this, especially in these days when there is such tremendous stress being laid upon the inherent qualities and potentialities of humanity.

There has been correspondence in one of our newspapers recently on this very matter where an outstanding ecclesiastical dignity has said once and for all, talking about man's depravity, that it is all nonsense; he has never found the man whom he could consign to hell, and he has never yet found the man whom he could not send to heaven. What is that but making man capable of rising to sublime heights of acceptance with God by reason of his own inherent qualities? But even unfallen man would never have arrived at that except by the crowning of him with Christ, that is, putting it round another way and saying, by his coming to the fulness of Christ.

Christ was essential, for man apart from Christ, can never come to God's thought. Christ is God's thought and is essential in any case. He has come to redeem, but, redemption or no redemption, He is essential. Do you see how much is touched by that? Oh, it touches the whole matter of how far we can go, what hope there is in ourselves. Why are we struggling, why are we so fretted about ourselves? To find some goodness in ourselves, to produce something which will commend us to God — for that is really the trouble with most of us. We are all the time trying to find some ground of justification in ourselves. When we make a mistake, when we go wrong, when we slip up, when we fail, we have a bad time because we feel that we are so bad, so hopeless. We take such a long time to come to God's final conclusion about that, that it is perfectly true, we are hopeless. A great deal of our bad time would be dismissed if only we saw this — that if we were all that we ourselves wanted to be, we should still need Christ. If all that in us which we hate were taken away, we would still need Christ. Christ is essential at every stage of life; from the lowest depths of sin and iniquity to

the highest level of sanctity and piety, Christ is still needed. That is why those who have lived long lives in fellowship with God and have attained unto a large measure of godliness, piety and holiness and knowing what it is to walk with the Lord, still have as their deepest consciousness the absolute necessity of their Lord. The Holy Spirit will see to it that we never get past that. Any self-satisfaction as to our spiritual state is contrary to the witness of the Spirit. Christ is essential. So let us not despair over the failure. We are not, of course, going at once to accept a life of sin and evil indulgences on that ground. You will not think that that is what I mean, but you will understand this, that what this letter teaches — and I am speaking only in a general way at present about it — and what the Scriptures teach throughout is this, that all these men and all these things have failed, but that is no reason whatever for despair. The Son is from eternity. He goes back before all the failure and He holds good over it all, He transcends it all.

Christ is the pattern — not this one and that one. Never make anything or any man the pattern. There is only one Pattern, that is Christ. If we begin to measure ourselves by ourselves or one another, we begin to set up models, patterns and ideals here, we are doomed to be most terribly disillusioned, and our faith will be destroyed if it is fastened upon anything less and other than Christ. That is the teaching, and that is why the first chapter of Hebrews brings the Son right into full view. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners ...". When all these times are past and all these fragmentary ways of speaking are concluded, He gathers it all up and presents it in His Son "whom He *appointed*". When did He appoint Him heir of all things? Before the worlds were — "through whom He made the ages". Antecedent to the creation of the ages, He appointed Him heir of all things. That is the declaration; and then this marvellous presentation of Him as transcending all others, even angels. So the pattern is first the Son as such, even before redemption is brought into view. The redemption follows, but the pattern for the redemption is there already. The redemption is only back to the pattern.

The eternal all-inclusiveness of Christ

a) Family relationship with God

Well, this divine intimation, as we have said, is very comprehensive, and the very first thing about it is that Christ is eternally inclusive: to use the phrase of Paul — “all things in Christ” (Eph. 1:10), the inclusiveness of this Pattern-Person. The first thing included in Him is the relationship with God which is to obtain in the age to come which is to be the universal position in that kingdom. What is it? Well, look at all these things about “holy brethren” (Heb. 3:1), “I and the children whom God hath given me” (Heb. 2:13), “I will declare thy name unto my brethren” (Heb. 2:12). It is a family relationship, a relationship of sons in the Son. That is how it is going to be, and that is the kingdom that we are receiving. The very first step and fragment of the kingdom which we are receiving now is the Spirit of sonship, a family relationship with God in Christ. You can see how that comprehends the cross, and how especially it takes up the gospels. “Our Father” (Matt. 6:9); “My Father and your Father” (John 20:17); “My God and your God” (John 20:17). If we stop to gather up all that, you see how much there is. But here it is — the kingdom which we are now receiving, the kingdom which is within us, is, in its very first phase, this — a family relationship, born ones, born from above, born by the Spirit of God, born of God. But that is *in Christ*, and if that were true of all men willy-nilly then Christ need never have come, and certainly He need never have done the work of redemption. But here no argument is necessary for the new birth being essential. We know that relationship in a family. It is a great prospect that in that age to come, the inhabited earth to come whereof we are speaking, that kingdom which we are now receiving, which will one day be full, complete, the nature of things at the very beginning and foundation will be a family relationship and all that that means. (This is not what we sometimes mean when we talk about ‘the human family’. What a mess that is!)

It is something more than just relationship; it is a nature, a kind of relationship. It is according to the relationship which existed and

exists between the Father and the Son. We do not want to be too technical and theological, but it is necessary for us to have understanding, and do not let us think of these words just as terms which indicate a kind of ordered systematized connection such as father and son. I believe that these very words mean more a nature, a kind, than just a relationship. You can have fathers and you can have sons, but how tragic that fact can be. You cannot get away from the fact that that man is the father and the son is a son, but what a tragic thing it is that it is so in so many cases. But here see the kind of father and the kind of son, and what exists between them, what it means that they are so related. That is to be expanded to the whole inhabited earth to come whereof we are speaking. That is the nature of the age to come, that is the kingdom which we are receiving, but oh! what a challenge that is to us. Are we receiving that kingdom, are we receiving that nature, is that kind of relationship being established between us in Christ? That is the work of the Spirit, but that is another aspect of things to which we come as we go on.

b) Dominion

Another one of the things in the inclusiveness of the Son is dominion. You pass from the type to the antitype. Adam is the type. "Thou madest him to have dominion" (Ps. 8:6 KJV). That is the type. Adam was a figure of Him that was to come. The antitype, the last Adam — "We behold Him ... crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9). He is in the place of absolute dominion. We will have to look at that more fully later. Dominion is not just an official position. It is ascendancy by reason of spiritual quality. There was that about the Lord Jesus in the days of His humiliation which was an absolutely dominant thing spiritually and morally in the presence of those who had this world's dominion in their hands. They were cowed by Him, He was the One who had the ascendancy. They did everything they could to wriggle out of that moral mastery which was with Him. Oh, if only they had not been brought into that predicament! What can they do to get out of the way of this Man? He is too much for

them, and there He is — His visage marred more than any man, in humiliation and suffering, and yet He is spiritually and morally the Prince; and dominion is that. What is all this chastening about? God is dealing with us as with sons, and he “learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8). He was made perfect through suffering, though He was a Son. “God dealeth with you as with sons” (Heb. 12:7). What is it all about? Have you pictures of sitting on golden thrones and all that sort of thing? That is not it. We are receiving a kingdom now, and it is not very pleasant. Every day we are challenged as to spiritual ascendancy, as to moral ascendancy, as to whether we are knowing how to reign together, and that is not official. The very position of humiliation — the offscouring of all things — in which we are found is the position which is qualifying, is the position in which we are intended by the Lord to be qualified for the age to come. That is what is going on. It is not a pleasant gospel, a pleasant teaching. We are slow to grasp it. We are receiving the kingdom, but what is the kingdom? Well, it is sonship, but it is also dominion.

But what is the nature of the dominion? Do you think that God is building His kingdom upon the lines on which men build theirs? We have seen kingdoms built in the last twelve years. What kind of kingdoms have they been? Ascendancy, mastery, domination, dominion — the idea of man being in the position of overlord. Is God going to build a thing like that? All that sort of thing is destined to go, and who will be the king unto our God? Those of us on this earth who, like our Lord have gone into humiliation, suffering, emptiness and weakness, and have learned in those conditions how to rise above them in our spirit. “The Father of our spirits” (Heb. 12:9). That is the realm in which everything is going on.

c) Access

Then all these other matters of access suggested by Moses and Aaron; the matter of heirship or inheritance, which is coming into our rest, suggested by Joshua; all these things are now found to be in their fullest and transcendent meaning in Christ. Joshua failed to

bring finally into the inheritance and into the rest, but not so with Christ. Moses and Aaron failed finally to establish the people in the presence of God in their access to Him; not so with Christ. "Through Him we ... have access to the Father" (Eph. 2:18). "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16). It is all in the inclusiveness of Christ, and this is the meaning of the coming kingdom.

The kingdom is on its way. It is not just something which is in itself exclusive, objective, out there, and one day it will come and be here. It is on its way. Dear brother, dear sister, every time you gain a spiritual victory in trial, the kingdom has come. You are receiving the kingdom every time you know some fresh expression of Christ as victor in your heart; then the kingdom has come. Every time you have blessed fellowship and communion with your God and Father in the inner sanctuary into which you have access, you are receiving a kingdom; the kingdom has come. The kingdom is on its way now, but, in other words, we are now, as the word literally means, in process of receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, and, having the Spirit, we have the earnest of the age to come. Whenever the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in power, we have tasted of the powers of the age to come. It is only an earnest, it is only a taste; it is going to be all like that. Well then, why cling to mere types and figures and outward things when that is the nature of things? That is what the letter is all about. That has all failed. Why cling to it, why try to revive it, why try to re-establish that, why go on with it? It has never done the thing which men hoped it would, had wanted it to do, tried to make it do. But Christ is the realization of every thought suggested by those things, and you can leave that and "look off unto Jesus the author and perfecter ..." (Heb. 12:2), the beginning, the end, the all-comprehending of the divine thought. "Look off unto Jesus".

PRESENT ACTIVITY IN RELATION TO THE KINGDOM

"For not unto angels did He subject the inhabited earth to come, whereof we speak" (Heb. 2:5).

"But we behold Him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9).

*"... and tasted ... the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5).
"Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken ..."
(Heb. 12:28).*

In our previous meditation, we were seeing that these three fragments indicate in a comprehensive way God's intention as to this world from eternity — that it should be a kingdom, and that that kingdom should take its character from His Son who is set forth at the commencement of this letter as all-comprehending and all-inclusive and that the work of redemption is only a bringing back to God's thought. The Lord Jesus is not just an emergency provision, but in Himself, before ever there was an emergency, that thought of God was fully complete and eternally established. Although in time there has been a breakdown, first in Adam, and then in Israel, yet Christ stands above over all, unalterably the pattern, the inclusiveness of God's intention, and from God's side, where His Son is concerned, there never has been any breakdown and there never can be. The Rock is eternal and unalterable. Christ is that.

This letter was given by the Holy Spirit in order to get people away from the breakdown, and all that does break down because

it is planted in this earth and not in heaven. It is written therefore to get people detached from earth and attached to heaven, delivered from the temporal, which is always unsafe and uncertain, and bound up with the spiritual, the eternal, the heavenly. That is the object of the letter, and in that way it comprehends and goes beyond all time, and seeks to show that the true people of God are not time people at all. By reason of a true relationship with the Lord Jesus, they date back before time and on when time shall be no more. In our previous meditation, we spent most of our time in trying to see how Christ is God's eternal pattern, and that that pattern is a Person and not a thing and not a system at all so far as this earth is concerned. We went on to say something about the inclusiveness of Christ. Before we speak more specifically about that inclusiveness, I think I might just go a little further with the general presentation of what is here.

A spiritual Kingdom being received now

We have seen what the age to come will be like, how Christ will give character to that age in every respect and detail. Now just a little word about the *present* aspect in relation to the age to come, and firstly we must be reminded that we are now receiving the kingdom which cannot be shaken. As we emphasized in our previous meditation, the statement is: "Wherefore being now in course or process of receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken." It is not something just future, it is something which we are now receiving. We are in process of receiving now which must mean that the present aspect is essentially spiritual. It is a spiritual kingdom that we are receiving now. Whatever the age to come may be in a more literal way, at present that age is expressed in spiritual terms, that is everything now is of a spiritual nature because everything is by the Spirit. In this present phase of things eternal, everything is essentially of the Spirit and is therefore spiritual. This letter is a solid argument for that. The whole argument here is against the

temporal aspect of the things of God. In the past age of Israel, there was a temporal aspect of the things of God. It completely broken down and failed. As we said before, even if it had not broken down and failed, Christ would have been necessary to perfect it and to crown it. But it did utterly fail, and God is not taking it up again, either to remedy, patch up, put it on crutches to try and get it going again; He has finished with it. He has for the present suspended every temporal aspect of His heavenly things.

Every system of things which is a temporal system representing divine things does not belong to this time, and that is a very drastic and a very comprehensive fact. The tendency of some of us Christian people is to live in another age, an age which is not this age, and is very largely a past age; to preserve or re-institute the old outward forms of the things of God as to places, as to ritual, all that whole realm of things seen, things grasped which can be grasped by the soul rather than by the spirit. As you know, this letter brings in very positively that two-edged sword which makes a clean division between those two things, and it does so right at that point where the argument relates to Israel's failure to go through to God's full thought in the land and they are perishing in the wilderness, and the implication is that in the wilderness they persisted in living in the soul realm. That is, in a realm where everything was appraised by the eyes, by the physical and soul senses, the natural life — reason and feeling and sight and so on. They would live on that level, on that basis, and because they did, they were never sure. Everything was constantly changing, they were people of continuous variableness, never established, and they never inherited. At that point the two-edged sword is brought in which divides between soul and spirit. And it is only when things are truly spiritual that you get on to the real, the abiding, the sure, the unchanging, the eternal, the heavenly. To know a life in the Spirit is to be delivered from all that variableness of the temporal and the earthly which is the soul realm of things.

I am not going to go far with that, but I indicate it because it does get right to the heart of this whole matter of the present age,

and right through this age people are constantly trying to get back on to that old level, that old realm of a soul apprehension of divine things. That is, the bringing of heavenly things down to a natural level of life and so having externalities and forms. Even spiritual people are caught in this tendency to set up something which is an order, and before long becomes a very legalistic order which brings into bondage. In as far as that is true we have left the realm of the Spirit. Where the Spirit is Lord there is no bondage; there is liberty, and we can take it for sure that that liberty of the Spirit will never be spiritual license, it will always be safety. I do not want to get away from the main line of this letter or of the revelation which the Lord has given us. The present aspect of the kingdom is essentially spiritual; it is all by the Spirit. That works out in a threefold way according to the Word, and especially the emphasis in this letter.

1. The securing of the citizens of the Kingdom

First of all, it is the securing of, shall we say, the potential citizens of the kingdom which is coming, the securing of the sons in the Son. One of the aspects of the present age is the securing out from the nations the citizens to govern the inhabited earth to come, this kingdom which we are receiving, spiritual children of God who know from the very initiation of a new existence what it means to be spiritual, born of the Spirit from above, becoming spiritual by an entirely new existence. That is indicated in another connection which we note next, but we take it here in anticipation. In chapter 12 the writer refers to God as the "Father of our spirits". "Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of our spirits" — indicating that there is something born of God. Now it is not necessary here for me to speak to you about new birth, but I do want to say that it is a very important aspect of this present time that we should be occupied with the securing of these potential citizens. It belongs to this age to get them, to see men and women born of the Spirit, coming into an entirely new kingdom, a different kingdom where, right at the very heart of their being, there is something which is eternal, heavenly, which is not of this world, the planting in

them of that which will gravitate to eternity and back to its source in God, a mighty power of a life which will, given obedience to its laws, fulfil all the divine purpose within them. Oh, it is so important that we should not only see the necessity for people to be saved, but that we should make sure that there is a definite, positive work of the Spirit in them by which they receive this life of God, this life of the ages, this life which no one has by nature. It is so important we should make sure that the thing has happened, that it has come out of eternity right into them now to constitute them, at the centre of their being, eternal and heavenly. That is elementary, I know, but I do not think the emphasis is out of place, it is a phase of the kingdom which we are receiving now; it is the life of that kingdom coming into these potential citizens, these children of God.

Now why am I saying that to you? For this reason, that there is a very real need of adjustment on this point. You do not need to be adjusted and put right on the matter of people being saved, leading people to the Lord. That is not what I am after. But there is a need for adjustment here, that we do not just see the matter of people being saved as something in itself. We have got to see it with this background of the whole purpose of God. It is something within a great realm of divine thought. It is a matter of this age to come, or, shall we say, it is a matter of that which God has had in view from all eternity. It is not just to have people saved, not just to get conversions. That can be something in itself, an interest or pursuit in itself — but to see it in the light of the whole purpose of God that — not that in the age to come everybody shall be saved, no; but that in the age to come everything shall be a living expression of God's Son. That is the point. It is to get Christ inside, with all the potentialities of Christ so that in that glorious age it shall be universal Christ that exists. It is not just saved people, it is Christ manifested. That is the object of God now. We concentrate upon the necessity for people being saved and that is quite right, but let us get God's background to that. Why? Oh, that they shall not be lost! That is not good enough. God's whole view and object and concern is in His Son. He has summed up all things in Christ, Christ

is the vision of the Father. He is all-comprehending, He is to fill all things, and so everyone born of God becomes a potential vessel of the manifestation of Christ, and we have got to have Christ always in view — not just the salvation of that soul, but that that one becomes a measure of Christ in this universe. We are out, not to people the universe with converted souls, but to people it with Christ corporately expressed. Oh, our passion must be Christ, not souls in themselves. This one must be for Christ in this sense that Christ finds in His satisfaction the answer to the Father's promise to Him that He will give Him the nations of the uttermost parts of the earth — not just to have people — but in which He, the Son, shall be revealed. So the object of evangelization, salvation, is just Christ; and again, that is why the first chapter of this letter is what it is. "God ... hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son". It is the inclusiveness of Christ standing over everything. Well, it is the gathering of the people who are to govern the inhabited earth to come, and what they are, what their character is. That is, they are *in expression* Christ.

2. The training of the citizens

The second aspect of this present phase of the coming kingdom is the training of the citizens. This letter has quite a bit to say about the training — I use the word literally — chastening, child-training. Chapter 12 is much occupied with that. It is the child-training of these sons and what is the training? It is spiritual again. Just as the children are spiritual children, their training is spiritual training. So we come back to that fragment — "It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chastened not ... We had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (Heb. 12:7-9). "The Father of (our) spirits". In what realm is our training? It is essentially spiritual training. Unto what end? We are brought into the realm of sonship; through childhood into the realm of sonship.

What is sonship? We know it is something more than childhood. According to the New Testament, it is to come to the place where we can be absolutely relied upon, take responsibility, be 'placed' is the actual word, placed as sons, put in the place where we can be trusted with a representation of the Father and the upholding of His rights and His honour. Well, what a tremendous amount of training has to be done in our spirits to get us there. I think we will all confess that we are not too trustworthy, not too reliable spiritually, not too sure that the Lord cannot put very much responsibility upon us. Now let us be quite frank about this, it is true. The fact is that immediately the Lord begins to put responsibility upon us, we begin to get up on our hind legs and become something. For this natural life, the most dangerous thing is blessing, the most perilous thing is prosperity. Blessing carries with it infinite perils because of what we are. As soon as things begin to increase, grow, enlarge, we begin to strut about like peacocks, all our feathers out. It is true of this nature. We know quite well that we are not trustworthy, and therefore a great deal of discipline has to be wrought in us to get us to a place where we can carry responsibility in absolute humility and meekness, without any self-assertiveness, without any pride. The Lord knows quite well, whether we know it or not about ourselves, that the root sin in this universe is pride. It began there — "till pride was found in thee" — and that is the fountain-head of that poison which has been injected into the race through Adam, and it runs through the very life-stream of this whole creation and its forms of expression are countless. We do not often recognise that certain things are only our pride. Quite a lot of people are proud of their humility. Yes, we need not try, we should altogether fail if we attempted to box the compass of pride's expression, but it is there, and the realm in which it shows itself where God's people are concerned is the realm of spiritual blessing.

A very deep work of emptying and breaking and disciplining has to be done to bring us to the place of responsibility where we can be placed as sons. I am going to say more about that in another connection, but here is the fact. God, the Father of our

spirits, is dealing with us as with sons, and it is a matter of *spiritual* development and spiritual development is to do with our own souls, for that thing which is so wrong is seated in our souls.

God is dealing with us to train us spiritually, and He knows the best way in which to do it in every one of us. He does not standardize His training. Every one of us is dealt with in a different way. What would be discipline to me would be no discipline at all to another, but He knows. He is dealing with you and me in the way in which His infinite wisdom knows is the best way to reach His end. Do we believe that? Not always, it is not a pleasant truth, but there is the fact. Either the Word of God is true or it is not true, and here it is: "God dealeth with you as with sons." He is the Father of our spirits and He is getting down to spiritual matters, spiritual life, spiritual measure. He is transforming us through the medium of our spirits. All suffering does not have that effect because we are not spiritual enough, we are not taking it in the realm of things spiritual, we are regarding it naturally, we may be revolting against it, not regarding it as bearing upon our spiritual life. It is only when we adjust to this something which has in it spiritual purposes that the thing does us any good. It does not do us any good until we take the spiritual into account. Suffering itself may be of no value and may do more harm than good. But when it is taken hold of by spiritual people for spiritual ends it immediately begins to make a difference.

3. The issue of the training

Then, as the issue of that, the third thing is spiritual full growth. We are children, spiritual children, potential sons. We are being dealt with spiritually as in the light of sonship, and the end in view is spiritual full growth, you know that the letter has quite a bit about that matter. Hebrews 5:12 brings it very strongly and clearly into view. "For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that someone teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food." Then into chapter 6 "Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on

to full growth” and the terrible argument gathered round Israel failing in the wilderness, the terrible warnings. This is the present aspect of the kingdom. As we have said, every fresh degree of spiritual life and spiritual growth, every fresh triumph spiritually is the kingdom coming. We are receiving the kingdom in a spiritual way as we grow spiritually, as we move towards full growth. In that connection, there are all these exhortations and admonitions: “Let us fear therefore ...” (Heb. 4:1); “let us hold fast ...” (Heb. 4:14); “let us go on ...” (Heb. 6:1 A.V.); a constant repetition — let us, let us, let us ... — all occupied with this matter of full growth.

A crisis shaking

Then we come, in this general survey, to the third aspect of this. There is the prospect, there is the present activity, and then there is the crisis shaking. We are led at the conclusion of the letter to this: “Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven” (Heb. 12:26) — the great crisis shaking by which the kingdom will be brought in fully, and that shaking has two aspects. There is a spiritual shaking; everything after all which, although thought to represent God but which nevertheless is just tied up with this earth, will find itself shaken to its very foundations and will crash. A terrific spiritual shaking is going to take place, I am not sure that it has not started. In quiet, deep ways, there is a spiritual shaking going on just now, and a lot of things are coming into the realm of question which were thought to be things of God: they are not able to stand up to the test. Of course, there is a sense in which that is always going on, but the thing is going to intensify towards a crisis. Things are all going to come into the realm of spiritual judgment and a spiritual shaking is going to take place, so that the things which cannot be shaken shall remain. It must be.

Now then, that means, of course, that if there is going to be an abiding, it must be spiritual. It must be heavenly and eternal. It must not have its roots in this earth, its life in this world.

A literal cosmic shaking

But there is the other aspect. There is going to be a literal cosmic shaking. "Also the heaven". You remember that Peter has something to say about this. "The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2 Pet. 3:12). I think such words as those have become very much more intelligible lately — the very elements on fire, fervent heat, cosmic heat, and all these things shall be dissolved, says Peter. We understand something more about how possible that is now. Well, something like that is going to happen. Fire, literal fire, is going to purge this earth, this world, and all these things shall be dissolved, but there is that which cannot be dissolved. We are thrown back to Melchizedek, without father, without mother, nothing rooted in this earth, "made like unto the Son of God ... in the power of an indissoluble life" (Heb. 7:1-3,16). "All these things shall be dissolved ... in the power of an indissoluble life." Sonship is that. It abides the fervent heat, it abides the shaking, it does not belong to what passes and can be destroyed. It is from eternity to eternity, and in the age to come it will be that which has the timeless life in it. "All these things shall be dissolved." We see how fast the world is hastening towards that. How easy it is to understand how that can be done. Why, if man can do it on the scale in which he can do it, what about God? This is no new discovery to God, He has the whole of that power in His hand, and in a moment it can fulfil a worldwide command. Well, there are lots of things which at one time seemed mysterious which today are actualities, and here is this statement: "Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven", and here is the Scripture which points to a crisis in this world's course when the very elements being on fire shall melt with fervent heat. We are moving towards that crisis; the cosmic disturbances of our time seem to point to it.

Again the letter has a very proper place in our day. Oh, says this letter, get away from all these mere representations, types, figures, earthly things; get to the eternal reality — Christ the Son.

Sonship under test

I am coming back for a moment or two to this inclusiveness of Christ, just to touch upon this matter of sonship. Sonship stands over everything, governs everything. It is as though, gathered up into a simple statement, this letter, and much more than this letter, says that God's thought is to bring into the meaning of sonship as represented by His Son. In that meaning all the thought of God is realized in man. So the first chapter stands governing everything.

Now do you see what is included in that matter of sonship? Let us go back to the gospels. The Lord Jesus was no sooner anointed of the Holy Spirit to take up His divine work in relation to God's eternal thought and intention, than He was confronted by the prince of this world personally. A voice from heaven had recently been heard saying, "This is My beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17). The prince of this world was an unseen onlooker at the Jordan, and heard what that voice said, and we may say he said, All right, we will see! And so immediately driven of the Spirit into the wilderness, the prince of this world comes and takes up that matter. "If thou be the Son...", "if thou be the Son...". Without going into all the familiar details of the three temptations, let us get behind them. This sonship is the point of challenge, the point of question; everything is bound up with that. This One is a representative one, an inclusive one; in Him all the age to come is bound up, is centred, and the prince of this world knows quite well that he has no place in that. The only thing for him, the only hope for him and his kingdom is to do something about this sonship. That is his side. The other side is this, the divine side, that sonship has got to be established through probation, through testing, which means that that absolute dominion of the age to come has to be established through testing, through trial, and trial on the basis of sonship. Sonship means that; sonship carries with it dominion ultimately. It involves dominion ultimately. Therefore to defeat the dominion he must do something about this sonship. Sonship is now on probation, under test, now will it go through?

The focal point of the test

The focal point of the test is faith, faith in God, God as Father — because it is 'Son'. The prince of this world leads this thing right up, at last he divulges what he is after, he lets it out. Our translation is not always most helpful here. "... The devil ... showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, To thee will I give all this *authority*, and the glory of them" (Matt. 4:8,9). 'Authority' was the word he used. "If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine". What authority? The kingdoms of this world. Dominion is inherent in sonship, bound up with sonship. If you can be swung off the line of faith in the Father, you do something of injury to the very Spirit of sonship, and the purpose of God — dominion — is brought into arrest. That is exactly what comes out in this letter to the Hebrews. "Thou makest him to have dominion" (Ps. 8:6; Heb. 2:7). He was put on probation but failed. Here is this One made a little lower than the angels because of the suffering of death, on probation, tested by the prince of this world on the question of faith in the Father. The object was that faith in the Father should be shaken, disturbed and tainted and so sonship would lose its essential meaning and forfeit its ultimate inheritance of dominion. The Satan's kingdom would be established. This letter takes that up. Here is the Son; He has passed through His probation of suffering and death. "We behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour." He has passed through. What about us? The whole of the rest of the letter brings us in — the sons to be brought to glory.

But now? By faith (Hebrew 11) unto dominion, unto the kingdom, unto the age to come, unto all that He means by sonship in Christ and with Christ. We are on test. We are given the illustration of Israel in the wilderness on probation, on test, but they failed, they never went over. Do not be like that. "Today if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. 3:7). That is said, not to the unsaved but to the saved, to the people of God. We preach that to

the unsaved: 'Harden not your hearts against the gospel.' No, this is not a gospel text, it is a message to believers. You are under severe test, beware of your heart becoming hard and bitter; and whether you do become bitter because of trial depends entirely upon your attitude. Do you take the attitude: This has spiritual purposes in view, God is after some spiritual increase and enlargement by the difficult, dark, trying way through which He is leading me; He is after spiritual gain? Or do we take the other view: the Lord is against us, the Lord does not love us, the Lord has no interest in us, the Lord has forgotten to be gracious. Nursing that spirit is just going to tie the very vitals of God's intention in probation and in trial. "My son, despise not thou the discipline, the training, the chastening of the Lord." It has great possibilities, great "recompense of reward". "Afterward" — what God is after is that afterward. It is easy to say these things, but it is not so easy to face up to them when we are in the situation.

Laying aside weights and unbelief

So the final appeal is here: "Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us" (Heb. 12:1). "Lay aside every weight" — what is that? Well, what hinders us from accepting what we are saying now? We have some interests here in this life, interests on this earth, some natural interests. We may not be realizing our ambitions, we may not be having given to us by the Lord the things that we want, and because things are not going as we want them or think they should go, and other people get what we do not get, we feel deprived of certain things. These things are weights, they keep us from going on: weights of natural interest, of worldly concern, not gross worldliness, but just our life on this earth, what a big thing it is, what it means to us in so many ways; they are the weights. Lay them aside.

"And the sin which doth so easily beset us". How mistaken

people have been in talking about 'besetting sins' as an exposition of that passage. It does not refer to your besetting sin. The sin which does so easily beset is doubt, unbelief; so easily besetting, especially in trial, in the furnace of affliction. The enemy is always at our elbow to suggest that God has forgotten us or has turned against us. He will do anything to get us overcome with that easily besetting sin — questioning, doubting, disbelieving. That is why (there are no chapter divisions really) chapter 12 immediately follows chapter 11, the chapter of faith. Let us lay aside the easily besetting sin of unbelief, "and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame". "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord"; "despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God".

Well, that is the message. We are in the course of something very great, it is the whole thought of God; we are called unto that. The Lord's dealings with us now are related to that, and this present phase is a very vital part of the eternal intention of the Lord.

THE SURE FOUNDATION OF THE KINGDOM

"I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained" (Job 42:2).

"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).

"... who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:16).

"Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken ..." (Heb. 12:28).

We go back to the words in Job. "I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained." The second part of the verse would be more accurately translated: "and thou canst be hindered in no purpose of thine". These words come right at the end of the book of Job. That fact carries with it its own very valuable significance. The whole book, as we know, has been a meeting of a challenge; the challenge had to do with righteousness. God was meeting that challenge in the life of His servant Job. When all was said — and quite a lot was said, the book is largely occupied with what was said in connection with that very matter of righteousness. And when all was done (and Satan had done a lot), God's verdict upon His servant Job was that he had spoken the thing which was right concerning Him (Job 42:7). He has made me right, he has justified God; he has, not in word alone but in his heart, in his spirit, said, "Let God be true and every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4). And as the result, Job's life was preserved and

increased, or, in other words, he came up from a great depth as by the power of resurrection, and was set in a large place. There are all the elements, features, in figure, in type, of what resurrection means. It is enlargement, emancipation from limitation, increase, fulness. Job came into that, and Job's verdict (God had passed His verdict) was: "Thou canst be hindered in no purpose of thine." Satan had spent himself, exhausted himself, gone to the farthest limit of divine permission; the verdict — "Thou canst do all things, and thou canst be hindered in no purpose of thine".

The basis of the Kingdom

Now, in spiritual truth and principle, that is what the letter to the Hebrews is all about — indeed, very much more than the letter to the Hebrews. It is what it is all about with you and with me, it is all about what Paul calls or terms "life because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:10). The letter opens with the declaration "Thy throne" (the throne of the Son) ... is forever and ever, and the sceptre of uprightness" (if you like, 'of righteousness') "is the sceptre of thy kingdom". The book closes with "receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken". As we emphasized in a previous meditation, we are now in process of receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. What kind of kingdom is His kingdom, the kingdom which is being received by us through faith? It is the kingdom which combines these two things — life because of righteousness.

And you can see that that is the setting of the whole Bible. The book of Genesis opens with that background, with that staging. The issue is that of life, there is no doubt about it. The very first thing that is contended, that becomes the object of all the disputing, arguing, reasoning, and all satanic effort where man is concerned is this matter of uncreated or indissoluble life. It is all about that. The only way to put that back, to prevent attainment unto that, is to corrupt, for "corruption cannot inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:50). Sinful life cannot inherit sinless life; life which

has in it the seeds of death because of corruption cannot inherit that life which is deathless. So it is all a matter of life because of righteousness. Adam was given a kingdom; that kingdom was, after probation, intended to be established forever, an unshakeable kingdom based upon an indissoluble life because of a triumphant righteousness. But that kingdom was shaken, and it collapsed through corruption and the life was never possessed. Israel was given a kingdom with all that indicated how and upon what basis that kingdom could be established forever, as long as the sun. This letter to the Hebrews contains all that symbolism and typology which indicated the basis of an eternal kingdom — life because of righteousness. Because of corruption, that kingdom was shaken and fell.

Righteousness and indissoluble life

Now here comes this kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom because thy sceptre is the sceptre of uprightness. “Wherefore receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken ...”. Why? Because in the first place it is established upon a righteousness which is absolute, which is final, to which nothing has to be added, a righteousness which is of God. Then secondly, life, indissoluble life. Those are two simple pillars of the faith. This letter, as you know, is one tremendous effort to persuade and encourage the people of God to get their feet fully established upon this twofold basis — not the righteousness of works, ritual, ordinances, forms, and of all those things which had proved so futile and unavailing. As Paul argues in his Roman letter, this is because of the weakness of the flesh; if any kingdom rests upon what man is, it will be shaken, it will collapse, but if the kingdom rests upon what that Man is, it is all right, it is forever and ever. Righteousness is the foundation of His kingdom which is an everlasting kingdom and the kingdom which we, through faith, are receiving. Of course, that is very simple and elementary, but that is not all.

The realm of the will of God

We pointed out, or indicated, in a previous mediation, that in this letter to the Hebrews we are taken altogether outside of time and outside of this world. We are placed in that which is eternal and heavenly, and shown that it is there, and only there, that our security is; it is only there that we really have a rock under our feet. Anything, even things which are of God, planted on this earth will be shaken and will fall. In this matter of which we are speaking — righteousness and life incorruptible and indissoluble, we get outside of time and we get into the realm of that will of God. I think that you and I have yet much to learn about the will of God. Let us get away from all the little details of our lives and our desiring and our struggling for the will of God. It is a very much bigger thing than that. When the will of God is spoken about in its complete sense in the New Testament, you always get behind time into eternity, and you at once become linked up with God's eternal counsels concerning His Son. I am not able to stay now to turn to passages, but you will recognize that I am keeping very closely to the text. Right in the heart of this letter we come to this — "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I am come (In the roll of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:5-7).

Now, what was the will of God that He came to do? Was it to go to the cross? That was in the will of God as a method, as a means. What was the will of God? You have to comprehend the divine thought from all eternity. What is the divine thought from all eternity? The will and purpose of God is the incorruptible kingdom of righteousness and of an indissoluble life. It was that that Christ came to accomplish — a kingdom of absolute righteousness, God's own righteousness; a kingdom of life, indissoluble, timeless, age-abiding. That is God's will, something settled in eternity.

It is a tremendous thing to notice the things that are said about that will by Paul in his Ephesians letter. In Ephesians 1:5,

"according to the *good pleasure of his will*". And in Eph. 1:9-10: "... making known unto us *the mystery of His will*, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ". "In whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who works all things after *the counsel of his will*" (Eph. 1:11). The good pleasure of His will; the mystery of His will; the counsel of His will — this will of God has all that behind it. This tremendous will of God is the thing which is in view, and when it is realized fully and finally, what will it mean? A universe established in incorruptible righteousness where no taint of sin or unholiness can come or be found, a universe marked by life which cannot be dissolved. "I give unto (My sheep) eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:28) — an indissoluble life. That is the will of God which Christ came to accomplish, and that is something set in eternity. The counsel, the good pleasure of His will. You notice the setting of Ephesians; one is back there, before times eternal, fore-ordained, predestined. The good pleasure of His will, the mystery of His will, the counsel of His will. It is right back there.

Faith the link with God's eternal righteousness

Now then, this is a righteousness which has nothing to do with things in time, it is something altogether outside of time. The only connection between this righteousness of God and time is that faith links us with it, faith takes us out of time and links us with that timeless righteousness. Did I say we have something more to apprehend about this good and perfect and acceptable will of God? What I meant is just this, that we are so much governed, so much influenced and affected by what we find here in time, in ourselves. That becomes the ground of all our distress and trouble. But all that has come in in time, the whole world of iniquity, of unrighteousness and sin, has not touched that righteousness one little bit, has not affected it one iota. It makes absolutely no difference how much

unrighteousness there is in this universe, to the righteousness of God. That stands, and faith is just that we step out of what has come in in time into God's righteousness which is timeless. Faith wipes out what we are in time and all that is here, writes it off, renders it nil; faith in the righteousness of God. And this justifying by faith simply means that we are made as though we never had sinned. In God's sight, in His acceptance, it is as though there had never been a fall. We stand with God in His own timeless, incorruptible righteousness which has never been affected by anything that has come in. Do we recognize that all this history of sin has never touched the righteousness of God at all? That righteousness of God is as though nothing had ever happened here at all, and faith, which is the argument of this letter and of much more in the New Testament, is that which lifts us out of time into eternity, out of what has happened into what has never been touched at all by what has happened. It is the eternal rock; not a time rock but an eternal rock of our salvation. The eternity of His righteousness — how tremendous it is, and what a tremendous thing faith is as to righteousness! What a thing it does!

Do you not recognise that the whole effort of Satan as from the beginning is to bring us down into time, to get us mixed up with what has come in; in some way even to get us to try to overcome it, to grapple with it, to fight it, to suppress it? The lives of many children of God are just miserable existences by reason of their conflict with the unrighteousness in themselves, the struggle with their own sinful nature. There is no way through there at all. In ourselves, what we are by nature, we shall be to the end. What we are by grace and by faith is quite another thing. Well, you say, that is abstract, not very practical; wherein lies the practical value of that attitude, that position? It is a position which the Holy Spirit demands before He will do anything with us at all. The Holy Spirit demands a position of absolute faith in the righteousness of God before He will get to work at all. We suspend all the activities of the Holy Spirit immediately we try to do the work of God in our own justification and our own cleaning up. The Holy Spirit works through

the avenue of faith to make good in us that eternal righteousness. It is only as we look off from ourselves by nature, from what we find here as the impossible condition of things in the creation, only as we look off unto Jesus that we find rest coming into our hearts and any way of deliverance at all from that which obsesses and crushes and defeats. It is faith's looking off unto Jesus, and then life becomes active. It is life not because of our righteousness — we think it is; it is not because of our righteousness at all; it is life because of *His* righteousness which is entered into by faith. Then we become established and only so shall we be established.

If this word seems to you to be elementary, I am quite sure it will be a help to some; at any rate, it is a help to me. Some of us may not yet be established so that we are always reliable, dependable. We may be variables, up and down; one day we may be very bright and cheerful, everything is going well, but tomorrow we could be right out in blank, dark despair, and that may go on for weeks, months, years of our lives. We are not rooted and grounded, we are not settled and established, and why is it? It is all this matter of righteousness, of what has come in in time, and of failure to apprehend by faith that the righteousness of God lifts us out of that big chasm which was created when Adam sinned, and goes on to the end of this creation until that kingdom is fully and finally established which is a kingdom of righteousness. All that lies in that great chasm from Adam's sin to the glory is simply non-existent where the righteousness of God is concerned. You are put out of it. That belongs to time, it does not exist where God's righteousness and life are concerned. Faith lifts us out of the chasm. It does not tell us to wallow in the chasm and try to overcome and be good and be better. It says, You are out of that by faith, and as you really take that position, the Holy Spirit begins to witness rest to our hearts and life in our spirits. It is life because of His righteousness, not ours. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, that is, it is an ageless kingdom, a timeless kingdom because His sceptre is the sceptre of uprightness; it is after the power of an indissoluble life.

Adam's kingdom was shaken and fell because unrighteousness

entered in. Adam's life was dissolved, it was a life capable of being dissolved, and it was dissolved because of corruption. We inherit that naturally from Adam, but there is another Adam from whom we inherit an incorruptible life, indissoluble life, and in relation to the Lord Jesus we are completely lifted out of our relationship to Adam. "Wherefore receiving a kingdom ...". How? By faith we receive His righteousness and we keep on receiving His righteousness. Yes, there is a crisis, there is a beginning in which we are justified before Him from all things and are brought into a position or relationship with God in righteousness. But do we not find that we have continually by faith to appropriate that righteousness, to meet every accusation of the Evil One, every attempt of his to undo us, on the ground of faith in His righteousness? Immediately we begin to listen to his arguments and accept his accusations, we are down wallowing in the mire of that cesspool again. While we maintain our position of faith in the righteousness which is not ours, but another's and only ours because it is His for us, it is our inheritance, we are receiving a kingdom, the kingdom is coming.

And what is true of the righteousness is true of the life. How is this kingdom which is everlasting being received? We have everyday of our lives by faith to receive His life, continually take His life. What will our life avail? Can our life stand up to the situation? Have we got that vital force that will meet these spiritual conditions? Can we in the power of any energy of our own really get through? We know we cannot! We know that we are defeated along that line always and we are brought again and again and yet again to the place where, so far as our own vital resources are concerned, we cannot go on, we cannot meet the demand. That is just as it should be, there is nothing wrong about that. God has taken full account of that, and then He says, You are receiving a kingdom, you are day by day to receive a life which can stand up to everything. It is this life which has already overcome death at the flood, the testimony has been planted right in the very bed of the river when Jordan overflowed all its banks, and has gone through triumphant, the testimony of Jesus. He lives, He has a life which no other has. Receiving Him, the

Life, from day to day is receiving the everlasting kingdom, receiving through faith.

Well, you know these things, but "if you know them, happy are ye if you do them". It is a matter of continually and persistently refusing to accept what has come in and what we find here in the conditions resulting from Adam's sin, whether of unrighteousness or of death, lifelessness. It is receiving that which is the very kingdom of our Lord Jesus, an unassailable righteousness, an indissoluble life. "Wherefore receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken". His life cannot be shaken; it is above all powers to shake. His righteousness cannot be shaken; it transcends all powers in this universe. That is the simple word just now. Look again; here is Job right at the end of the story. He has gone through it all and he says, "I know that thou canst do all things, and thou canst be hindered in no purpose of thine." What a motto! "Thou canst be hindered in no purpose of thine". Well, put that in its eternal setting, the eternal purpose. "Thou canst not be hindered." All that comes in in Adam makes no difference, does not affect it at all. It will be, it stands forever, leaps over this mighty and awful gap. "No purpose of thine can be hindered", and when God makes up His mind and has a will, and a will like this, Satan can do all that he is allowed to do. It is a lot; and men can say all that they are allowed to say, but the sure foundation of God stands. It makes no difference. In the end, the will of God will be found fully accomplished, and we, through faith, *will* be found righteous at the end, and through faith we shall live by that deathless life.

THE KING AND HIS ADMINISTRATION

Reading: Heb. 1:1-2; 3:6; Matt.16:16-18; 17:1-2,5,22-23,27; 18:15-20.

Authority bound up with sonship

Our present word is but a further underscoring of what, as a matter of doctrine and truth, is known to most of us — the matter of Christ's authority in God's House, and what that House means to God. "God ... hath at the end ... spoken ... Son-wise" (Heb. 1:2) is the literal meaning: and that is carried over to this further statement "Christ as a son, *over God's house*" (Heb. 3:6). The context shows quite clearly that it is a matter of His supremacy there, His authority there. A comparison is made with Moses. "Moses ... was faithful in all his house as a servant" — literally 'an attendant', but Moses had great authority even as an attendant in the house of God and we know God stood by His servant and supported him in a very drastic way. But when it comes to Christ, the position is far transcendent even of Moses. Here we are not dealing with an attendant in God's house, however great, however much God committed Himself to His servant Moses. Here we have to do with the Son who is not a servant in the house, but a Son over the house. The comparison, of course, is made in order to exalt the Lord Jesus, and in the first place to indicate His absolute supremacy. But it is a statement which goes further than that and contains more than that.

This matter of authority is bound up with Sonship, and, if not

the statement, the clear implication is that authority is found in the house of God when Christ is in His place, when Christ is Lord. The passages in Matthew make that perfectly clear and settled. The Lord has been speaking about the church and what should happen, and then He makes the statement that, so far as the church is concerned, "What things so ever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things so ever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). He is speaking about the Father in heaven and about the church and the authority in the church when His Name is honoured, when He is in His place. "I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." The authority reaches out there, comes right in among the Lord's people, and authority is with the church when it is truly the house of God, which it is when Christ is absolute Lord and that in a practical way.

Christ's authority and supremacy in the house

We have said before at one point that this letter to the Hebrews does collect up the Scriptures throughout, embrace them all, and it is very evident that that is true with regard to the gospel by Matthew. There is a close correspondence between this letter and Matthew's gospel, especially in this one connection of Christ's authority and supremacy in the house. You know that Matthew opens by singling out Christ, distinguishing Him in a particular way. He is "the son of David, the son of Abraham". Thus He is distinguished in sonship, He is marked. David had many sons, Abraham had many sons — his seed was as the sand, as the stars of heaven — and yet when the son of David and the son of Abraham is referred to, it is only one distinguished son, and that is the Lord Jesus. So Matthew opens by this distinguishing of the Lord Jesus as pre-eminent and as unique among all other seeds, all other sons, of David and Abraham. And Matthew's gospel closes with "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." This One distinguished at the beginning

is the One in whom universal authority is reposed from heaven. In between the two the church comes in in a peculiar way. You do not have it mentioned in the other gospels at all in this way. It is Matthew, strangely enough, who has to do with kingship in relation to Christ, who brings in the church.

The Holy Spirit is safeguarding and preserving the principle of the authority of Christ, and it is there in relation to the church; and then, as all of a piece with it (there is no gospel which brings it out more fully), the authority which is opposed to the Lord Jesus. Right from the beginning, you find another authority asserting itself. At the birth of the Lord Jesus there is Herod, that vessel of Satan seeking the destruction of this One who is to have the universal authority. You find this sinister counter-authority coming out again and again in different ways; sometimes personally and directly as in the wilderness; sometimes through individuals, some of which individuals were positive enemies of Christ like Herod, sometimes beloved and close associates like Peter. And not only through individuals but through companies — the scribes, rulers, elders, Pharisees and so on. But the two opposing authorities come out in Matthew's gospel in a very pronounced way. But my point here is that the authority of Christ finds its expression in and through the church. That is the point, and here in this letter to the Hebrews, that is what is implicit — the house of God and Christ as a Son over God's house, and that Son has been indicated as unique and supreme. We know so well from the first verses of the letter the pains being taken by the Holy Spirit through the writer to make it clear how far Christ is above all others, men and angels, and then that transcendence is brought right into the house of God. Well, that is something to observe, to take note of, to be impressed with, but we have to come, of course, to the practical values and outworking of that.

Christ's authority expressed by the house of God

We begin, then, by just reminding ourselves that God is establishing a house with which the authority of Christ is bound up.

Is Christ's universal authority going to be expressed? We say, Yes! How? By what means? By the house of God. Therefore, for the very expression of Christ's supremacy the house is necessary, and that is why God is building. God is establishing a house — I use the word 'establishing' as the better word than building here. Even establishing is not good enough. The word means quite simply and clearly that God is collecting and bringing in all that which makes a house. Literally, in ordinary, everyday language, it would be: God is bringing vessels and utensils and implements that go to make up a house. Interpreted spiritually, God is fixing up a house. This house, of course, is comprised of living beings coming into sonship as the context shows. "Whose house are we" (Heb. 3:6). God is constituting, establishing, a house, bringing it into being by collecting, bringing together, all that which makes a house. God will have everything there that is necessary to His purpose. Now He is doing that establishing, supplying, with all that goes to make a house, and the thing which He has in view is that by this means the supremacy of His Son is going to be displayed, expressed, manifested.

God works house-wise

That leads us to this further word, that God does everything house-wise. This is not just an idea which has come in. This is an eternal thought. As it is revealed to us in the Scriptures, it goes right back before the world was, it is an eternal thought, and it is not far into the Scriptures before we come upon that thought in expression. The house of God comes boldly out in its name and in the implications of it with Jacob at Luz — Bethel. "This is none other than the house of God" — Bethel (Gen. 28:17). Here we have indicated all that the house of God means. There is God Himself, the Lord, above in the place of Lordship and government. There is the life here on the earth absolutely governed from heaven, direct from heaven, coming under heaven's government. There is

the intercommunication between what is here and what is there, the angels of God ascending and descending. It is taken up by Christ with Nathanael (John 1:51). He is that ladder and it is in and through and upon Him by the Spirit that communication is carried on between heaven and earth; His house here and Himself there. It is at Bethel.

And, much more; Bethel is a full divine thought. You pass on still to these patriarchs. You come to Joseph; you come through the humiliation and the suffering to the exaltation, and Joseph in exaltation is told by Pharaoh that he shall be over all his house, that all his servants shall take their orders from him, and no one shall go in or out, only at the word of Joseph (Gen. 41:40-44). It was the fulfilment of his dream: absolute authority as in the house. This meant that in the first circle of his own brethren, his own family after the flesh, all the need is met by reason of his authority in the house: and beyond them to the world. Everything is in the hands of this exalted lord over the house. You can at once see something of the meaning of the house of God and Christ's authority in it, for these are foreshadowings.

The fulness of the house

You come again to the great builder of the house — the twin builders, shall we say — David and Solomon. The house comes into full view with Solomon, and what is the outstanding feature and characteristic of the house of God in the days of Solomon? It is just fulness, abundance. The thing that amazed everybody and overwhelmed the Queen of Sheba was the abundance, we could say the redundancy, of things there, the glory of that house, fulness. It is a principle. When Christ the greater Son of David, the greater Solomon, is over the house of God and things are constituted under His absolute government, there is no lack of spiritual bread, there is no shortage, there is no smallness. Now, this is not theory, this is not just Bible teaching, this is fact and fact which is

borne out surely in the experience of many of us here. If you have the Lord's people constituted according to Christ, under His government by the Holy Spirit, that is a place of plenty. You never go away hungry, dissatisfied; it is a place of plenty. It is the place of power, the place of light, the place of counsel, instruction. All that God's house means is found there. It is a place of refuge, a place of safety, a place of comfort. It is a place to which you look, and yet it is not a place, it is a people where you find your help. That is what God is seeking.

God moves *towards* His house

We are saying that God does everything house-wise. That moves in the two directions. God always moves *towards* His house. He indicates His house, He points out His house. Normally He does not work apart and independently of His house. It is quite an exception for God to move apart from His house. I am not saying that He never does the exceptional thing, but the normal procedure of the Lord is to work towards His house. If even Saul of Tarsus, with his great eternal destiny, is directed towards the house in Damascus to bring counsel, direction, enlightenment, help, deliverance and comfort, and later to the house in Antioch for his commission to be confirmed, how much more do we need that provision! It is a principle upon which God works. He works towards His house, and any attempt at work apart from that which is the object of God's concern will mean that the life is locked up and defeated; there is limitation. God works towards His house.

God works *from* His house

God works from His house. Really there would be a very great deal more effective and fruitful work in the world if it were less of the individual, less of the mere organization, and more of the

house order where a truly spiritual people under the authority of Christ by the Holy Spirit, stood behind what is being done. The work then would be far more effective, and the enemy would be far more countered than he is. Authority over the enemy calls for the house of God, and God moves out through His house. He says to the church: "What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven ... For where two or three are gathered together in my name, *there am I* in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:18-20). He is in the midst, the Son over the house, the One to whom all authority is given in heaven and earth. God moves always house-wise. Remember that. It may just be the solution to some of your problems when you are not getting through. You are trying to get through on an individual line; it will not work if you are coming into God's full intention. If you are trying to get through alone, you will not succeed. If you are trying to carry on by yourself, it will not work; you will just get so far. If you want to go farther, you will have to have something more in relatedness. Do take this seriously, because it is possible for us to accept the truth as truth and for us to have a kind of association with what we call the house of God, and yet for us to be right in the midst of the thing and be a detached Christian. We may attend all the meetings and yet still be a detached Christian, not really in, holding back all the time with questions, reservations and discontent and there, but not there; in but not in; accepting the truth, believing it all, and yet one by ourself or two by ourselves in the midst of the whole. A lot of that goes on, and that means limitations to those concerned and injury to the house of God. Remember this is a fact for all God's purpose: *house-wise is absolutely essential*, and you have got to be right in. You have to find some way of getting over those things that keep you out: you have to make it your business to get them removed. I beg you to raise this question. Is my limitation, my hold-up, my defeat, my weakness, due to some detachment or independence on my part? It is a question which may carry a lot with it.

Learning house-life

That leads us then to this final word for the moment. If God is constituting a house with the great object of bringing the fulness of His Son into expression in every way, and especially the authority of His Son in this universe, we have to learn house-life. It is a very important realm of education, a vital and valuable one — to learn house-life. We get a great deal of knocking about there. We know that to live collectively makes very serious demands upon us. It comes right up against our individualism, crankiness and peculiarities and all that — whether it be positive or negative — which is other than a corporate life. The positive, of course, are those things that stick out, that have got to be cut off, rubbed off, the awkwardness about us, those positive factors which make it very difficult for us to go on in a life of fellowship, in a house-life. The negative is just as bad — that drawing back, that reserve; yes, even our natural reticences and reluctances. The Lord has to do something with people who are negative just as with those who are positive. Some are not assertive, they are the retiring ones, always retiring in attitude, in spirit and in behaviour, and that natural retiringness may be a weakness in the house of God. The Lord has to do something, not to make us assertive but to make us positive contributors to the house. It is both ways. It is very practical, but when it is like that and the Lord is dealing with the weak and the shrinking and the retiring ones and making them strong in spirit, they count in the house of God. How many of you have been associated with a company of the Lord's people for years, and have never become a positive factor? You are always there, but what is the positive contribution you make on that side? And on the other, where things have to be eliminated and rubbed off, disciplined and smoothed down. We have to learn this house life, because bound up with it is no less a matter than all that is embodied in Christ as a Son over God's house.

I said at the beginning that this is no new information but it is a new emphasis, it is what the Lord would say to us. He is concerned

with a house, a spiritual house, and His concern with that house is His concern for His Son, to bring out all the glories of His Son, and they cannot be brought out just in separate individual lives; it requires the relatedness, the 'together-ness' of the Lord's people, to bring out the many-sidedness of Christ, His glories, His virtues, His splendours, and it requires this corporate life of the Lord's people to bring through the authority of Christ over the powers of evil, the enemy himself, and over all his workings. That brother you see, you cannot call him the devil. That awkward brother, you cannot cast him out as you would the devil; he is a brother, he is in the church, but there is something of the devil working through that brother, and you have to get behind the brother to the thing working through him and bring in the authority of Christ upon that which is working through him, and that authority comes in in two or three or the church. The thing is indicated personally; if accepted, it is all right. If not, then the collective action begins: first the church represented by two or three, and then, if that is refused, the whole church, as it may be there, coming into action in the authority of Christ, binding and loosing.

May the Lord use His word to make way for a fuller expression of the Lord Jesus.

PRESSING ON TO POSSESS THE KINGDOM

"Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit" (Heb. 6:1-3).

"Let us go on" or "press on". The entire object and appeal of this whole letter from beginning to end is concentrated in those four words — "let us go on". You notice that they form part of a parenthesis, a parenthesis made necessary by a difficulty up against which the apostle came as he sought to unburden his heart of God's message. That difficulty, as you notice, arises a little earlier a few verses before when he says regarding Melchizedek:

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing. For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partakes of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil."

It is a very important parenthesis. He has opened up the great

matter of Christ's eternal priesthood, His heavenly priesthood, His great work of mediation and intercession. He wants to get right into the depths of that and finds that he is held, limited, because of the situation existing with which the whole letter was intended to deal, and so, gathering up his one complete object in writing, he concentrates it into this small fragment of four words — "Let us go on"; "Let us press on." Let us stop this tarrying in over-prolonged spiritual infancy, let us leave the place of spiritual babyhood, and let us go on to full growth.

God's desire for grown-up children

What then, is the object of the whole letter, in the light of this parenthesis? The object of this entire letter is that Christians, believers, should be people of spiritual stature and measure, people who are growing all the time and leaving elementary and rudimentary things behind and coming to a position where their spiritual faculties and senses are developed in such a way as to constitute them spiritually responsible people with spiritual intelligence and spiritual capacity for receiving all that God wants them to have. That is the object of this whole letter — that Christians should be like that. God's thought is to have not only just born anew children, but grown-up children, in all that that means of inward spiritual development and enlarged capacity for the greatness that He has to impart.

Leaving the earthlies for the heavenlies

Now this letter shows us clearly that this is only possible on certain grounds. Firstly, this growing, this enlargement, this development, this increase of spiritual life and ability and capacity and faculty is only possible as we leave the earthlies for the heavenlies. The earthly things are set out, and what I mean, and what

this letter means by earthly things is just earthly representations of divine things. The *representations* are to be left for the actualities, the realities, the things which are truly heavenly. The earthly representations are here mentioned: the ritual, rites, forms, ceremonies, customs, performances, externalities of religion, all that system of things which can be seen, touched and handled. That which is merely earthly and of a representative nature should be left, and the spiritual realities which they represent, the heavenly things themselves, should be apprehended. It is only possible to go on to full growth as we do that. In effect, this word says, Well, all this religious paraphernalia and performance is just child's play, kindergarten, rudimentary; it is just pictures, not realities, pointing to something more but never bringing you to it. Now just leave it and come into the heavenly, spiritual realities. It is only possible to grow as that is done, as the temporal is left for the spiritual and as the passing is left for the eternal.

In order to do this, something else is required, so it is pointed out here. In order to leave these things, you have got to have something that helps you. You do not leave them unless you have seen something else. Do not leave one thing until you have grasped another. Do not go out into the backwoods. You do not leave what is in a sense concrete for something that is abstract. That is not the point at all, that is not the meaning of "spiritual" and "heavenly". No, no one has ever yet come into God's fuller thought, intention and measure on a negative. It has always been on the positive, and there are certain things therefore which have to be apprehended in order to go on in the sense of leaving those things for these.

The necessity for an apprehension of Christ

And the first and all-inclusive thing which has to be apprehended and forgive me speaking of it as a thing — is Christ. That is the whole point of this letter. The point is, if you have really seen the

Lord Jesus Christ, what He signifies, what He means, your religious toys will be thrown aside. You will rise up, you will move on, you will grow. To have personally seen the Lord Jesus is the basic and inclusive necessity for all spiritual growth. To have seen Him is to do what those first disciples of His did; they left their nets and they left their boats and they went after Him. The other things of earth are just left behind, even the religious things of earth, and you go on if you have seen the Lord. If we really do mean business, for it is a businesslike term this, "Let us press on" as those who mean business, who really are after the real thing, who are not satisfied with mere toys, figures and representations, but are after realities, we shall have a definite business transaction with Him in which we say, 'O Lord, make this known to me, reveal this to me, show me this'. That is His one great desire, because He knows even better than we know that the only hope of real spiritual fulness is in seeing Him; not literally with natural eyes, but having what the New Testament calls the revelation in our hearts. "It pleased God ... to reveal his Son in me" (Gal. 1:15,16), said Paul. To see Christ in our hearts, the eyes of our hearts enlightened to see Him, is the great inclusive secret of all spiritual progress and development.

The necessity for a settlement of first principles

Then this word points out that another thing is required — that is, an understanding and a settlement of the first principles; the understanding of the first principles and a getting of them settled once and for all. You notice they are referred to twice here. In Hebrews 5:12 — "ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God". Then again in Hebrews 6:1 — "Wherefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ" or "the first principles of Christ ...". And the first principles of Christ are enumerated.

Now for the sake of those who are more instructed in the Word, there are those who argue that these six things mentioned are

Jewish ordinances to be left behind. Now so far, up to date, with every effort to understand that, I find myself unable to accept that interpretation, because I do not believe that Jewish ordinances are the first principles of Christ. These six principles are the foundation of the Christian life, the matters in which young believers are to be instructed. I am not going to stay with them for long. I just pass over them quite quickly with a word on each, but we need to understand what these principles of the Christian life are.

The first principles are said to be these. "Not laying again a foundation of ...":

1. "Repentance from dead works"

Now there you have the implication of Jewish ordinances — dead works. Dead works comprehend all those religious activities and engagements in which men engage themselves for their own salvation, by which they hope to save themselves and improve themselves. Judaism was one big system of such works by which men tried to accomplish their own salvation, and it proved to be a hopeless effort. It failed utterly, and the whole of that system of religious activities — no matter how piously and devoutly performed — failed and proved to be dead works. This letter goes on to show that all the offerings on Jewish altars, all the bulls and goats ever slain, all the blood ever shed, all the priestly ministrations of that system, never solved the problem of a single conscience. This had to be repeated day after day, morning and evening, year after year throughout the whole life, and when a lifetime of shedding blood and making offerings was done, that soul was no more at rest in conscience before God than at the beginning. It all proved to be dead works. And here it says that the very beginning of a true Christian life is to stop your dead works, your religious works for your own salvation, and put your faith in the Lord Jesus. He does it. "Repentance from dead works". I am sure the apostle would not go on mentioning Jewish ordinances if these things were only Jewish ordinances to be left behind. No, he is speaking about things of Christ, not of Jewish ordinances.

2. "Faith towards God"

That is a basic, foundation principle of the Christian life. First, repentance. Do not miss the point of that — not repentance from all your sins merely but from your religion, your dead religion. Repent of your dead religion, repent of your efforts to save yourself, repent of all that faith in things which is not faith in God. "Faith towards God" — in this way, that God Himself has provided all the righteousness that you and I need in His Son Jesus Christ, and has said, If you will believe on my Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, I place to your account all the righteousness that you will ever need to stand in My presence. Do you believe it? Do you believe God in that way? That is the foundation to the Christian life. You will never get anywhere until you recognise that you can never work your own righteousness however religious and devout you may be. The only righteousness which God will ever accept is His own, and He has given us that in the Person of His Son, and He says, The basis and the beginning of the Christian life is faith towards God in that. You will never get anywhere until that faith in God is exercised.

3. "Of the teaching of baptisms"

It is not 'baptisms' here that is referred to as the foundation. It is the *teaching* of baptisms. Perhaps that is difficult, but it is very simply explained. There are baptisms — it is plural; evidently there is more than one, and you want to be taught as to the difference between them, to be able to discriminate between the two. There is an excellent example in the New Testament. When Paul arrived in Ephesus he found disciples and said, "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" (Acts 19:2). They said, "We did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given." "Into what then were ye baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism". Oh, said Paul, and here is the teaching of baptism, instruction: "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus" (vs. 4). When they heard that, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, not into John. These Jewish people to whom the

letter to the Hebrews was written were saying, John's baptism is the thing. Oh, says the instructed, enlightened apostle at once, no, it is baptism into the Lord Jesus. You must know the difference between these two baptisms — the teaching of baptism, discrimination — and see that it is baptism into the Lord Jesus that is the foundation, and the understanding of what that means. It simply means that as the baptism is a grave, a burial, you on the one side died to an old relationship, to an old life, to an old world, to an old system of interests. You died to them and are buried, and you take up a position on the other side of that grave as alive now unto heavenly, eternal interests — God's interests. It is all a new world and a new life; it is simply a dying and being buried and being raised again, and the baptism is a testimony to that, and that is foundational to the Christian life. It is a first principle to say, in Christ I have died to my old life, to my old realm of things, and in Christ as risen from the dead I live henceforth only unto Him.

4. "Of laying on of hands"

A large matter, wanting a lot of explanation. One point only I fasten on. You remember when the apostle Paul was converted and was instructed to go into Damascus, the Lord sent a man named Ananias to him, and it says, "Ananias ... entered into the house, and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul ..." (Acts 9:17) — and that was one of the greatest victories ever won in a man's heart. He had already argued out the matter with Christ, when He said to Ananias, "Go ... inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth". Ananias said, "Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name" — I am not touching that man, he has come here for that very purpose. The Lord said, "Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me", and the victory was gained after a big struggle in the heart of Ananias. And he came in and, instead of looking at him askance, he went straight up to him and said — "Brother Saul". That is the family relationship. And he laid his hands

upon him. There are many aspects of this matter of laying on of hands, but that is one aspect. It is the acknowledgment that all those who are accepted by Christ are one family, are one Body, are brought into a oneness together. There is an identification, and this giving of hands, so to speak, is an act of identifying one another as in the family, a brother, a sister, in Christ. It is basic, it must be basic, it must be a first principle. That is simple; it is not all, but it is enough to indicate.

5. "Of resurrection of the dead"

Is it necessary to say anything about that? It is basic, a foundation.

6. "Of eternal judgment"

Whatever we have to say about the nature of it, the point is that it is indicated here as a fact. The resurrection of the dead is a fact, eternal judgment is a fact. If you hesitate as to what it is like, do not let that kind of mentality rule out the fact; the fact is there.

These are six things, foundations, and the apostle says, You have got to understand them before you go on. You have to recognise their significance and then you have to settle them — "not laying again ...", not getting back behind this and having to do it all over again. Settle it once for all; have these things settled as your foundation. Now then, when they are settled, you are ready to go on.

The Necessity for Singleness of Heart

One other thing I am going to mention which is required in order to go on to full growth. It is that which lies implicit in Hebrews 4:12: "The word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart". What does that mean? That is not talking about the difference between soul and spirit. It means getting right

down through all your thoughts, intents and motives and discovering whether, in the depth of your being, in your spirit, whether you mean business, whether you have a true, pure, earnest spirit, so that your motives are not mixed. It means that your thoughts are not false, but right down deep where only the word of God as a sharp two-edged sword can pierce, where it gets right in, it discovers that you are not playing at things, not hedging things, not trying to wriggle, that there is no duplicity about you, but you are absolutely true in your attitude towards God and there is no prevarication at all. Unless that is so, we will not go on, we will not come to full growth, we shall not be developed Christians, with senses and faculties capable of apprehending the fuller meanings of God and attaining unto a position of responsibility and trustworthiness in the things of God.

It is only if we are true, utterly real, completely meaning business with God, only if arguments are not introduced, only if personal interests have no place — how things are going to affect us if we take this step — policy, diplomacy, considerations like that. For example, if I become a Christian, then so-and-so; if I take this step, it will involve me in such-and-such and I am not prepared for that. That is policy; that is not a true earnest spirit with God. You will never get anywhere if there is anything like that at all. It is only if you are in a place where, no matter what it costs, what it means, I am going on with God; no matter what people say or do. The letter to the Hebrews leads right up to this at the end: "Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb. 13:13); the camp of social life, the camp of religious life as it is here. If we take the attitude that it is better to suffer reproach with the Lord than to escape reproach and lose the Lord, we will go on. Let us go on, let us be like that, and we shall go on to full growth.

Concluded.

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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