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THE ALTAR AND THE NAME

T. Austin-Sparks

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THE ALTAR AND THE NAME

T. Austin-Sparks

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INTRODUCTION

Reading: Genesis 4:3-8.

"And Abraham built the altar there ... and Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh" (Gen. 22:9,14).

"And Moses built an altar and called the name of it Jehovah-Nissi" (Ex. 17:15).

"Then Gideon built an altar there ... and called it Jehovah-Shalom" (Judges 6:24).

The common and governing feature of this triad of Scriptures is the union of the altar and the name. The all-inclusive and dominating factor in the Bible — which is the book of human history in relation to God — is the glory and honour of God's name. It is for this that God is supremely jealous. Weakness, poverty, smallness and ineffectiveness of spiritual life can be mainly traced to an inadequate or misdirected motive. The appeal is so largely made on the basis of the advantages which will accrue to those appealed to. It is *their* good, *their* blessing, and *their* gain which is emphasized as the reason for a response. Salvation, peace, joy and heaven are the enticements and the rewards offered. Usually it is the Saviour before the Lord. The New Testament preachers did not put it that way. Their preaching was always related to the Person and the place — the rights — of Jesus as Lord. "We preach ... Christ Jesus as Lord" (2 Cor. 4:5). "He is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36).

Let us at once say that by the altar we mean the cross. The cross and the Name are joined — "... obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God ... gave unto him the name which is above every name" (Philip. 2:7-11). In our three heading Scriptures we have this union in three ways and with three meanings or connections — Abraham, Moses and Gideon and the

fundamental issue is the honour and vindication of the honour, of God's name.

Before we proceed to the examination and consideration of each of these, there are one or two preliminary but very important things to observe.

Firstly, the supreme question at issue in the cross of Jesus Christ, God's Son, is that of the honour of His Father's name. The cross was inclusive of many aspects of redemption, but over them all, beneath them all, and as the only ground of them all was this matter of God's honour being vindicated in a universe where that honour had been challenged. More will be said on that later but let us get our foundation clear and established.

Secondly, there are two categories into which everything in the Bible is divided since man's defection at the beginning:

- a) There is what (in the New Testament) is called the 'natural' ground; that is *man's* ground. It is a question as to what man can do and cannot do; of how far he can go, and where he has to stop because he can go no further. This is man, his range and limits. To this Paul the apostle referred in 1 Corinthians, chapters one and two.
- b) On the other side there is God's ground, which is *super-natural* ground. On this ground it is what God can do, and what God alone can do. God's honour and the glory of His name is always established on supernatural ground. In other words, God vindicates His honour on the ground of man's impossibility and His own exclusive ability.

Thirdly, this means, as the Bible everywhere shows, that when God moves for the honour of His name He moves on supernatural ground, and He moves His instruments off of 'natural' ground, that is, their own ability, name and glory and on to ground where only God can do it.

It is because there is so much of man and what he can do, or thinks that he can do, that there is so little of the absolutely super-natural in religious and 'Christian' work. God knows that all the glory will not come to Him, but that man will steal it, thus falling

into the very thing that Satan has for ever set himself to do. Therefore God will not commit Himself, and He leaves man to their own devices. This is why, in the case of His Son, "God was with Him", and the Father's name was ultimately so greatly glorified.

We are going to consider the episodes of Abraham, Moses and Gideon in the light of all this. But remember, the cross is always the basis, because the cross is always the end of all natural resource and glory.

1. Abraham – The altar and the Name

Having laid a broad and essential foundation for our consideration of this matter, which is so very important to the true Christian, we can now come to the first of the three cited instances of the union between the altar and the name.

"And Abraham built the altar there ... and Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-Jireh" (Gen. 22:9,14). "Jehovah-Jireh": the Lord will provide.

Although this designation of the Lord has usually been taken as a general statement of His Providence, in the connection with Abraham it is not such. It is related to a fundamental need in God Himself. We have to get behind all the familiar details of Abraham's life and get our finger upon the essential and inclusive factor. We repeat that the all-governing factor was the vindication of the honour of the Lord, and therefore, the glory of His name. To do this, as we noticed, everything has to be taken away from natural ground and brought on to the supernatural.

The focal point of everything is Isaac.

a) Isaac was the focal point of God's purpose

The purpose was a heavenly 'seed', or people. This purpose God had clearly made known to Abraham and was embodied in a promise. "God made promise to Abraham" (Heb. 6:13, Gal. 3:18, et cetera) Further, the purpose and promise were inseparably bound up with Isaac. That this 'seed' was to be of a *heavenly* kind is

borne out by everything that relates to it in both Testaments, and the ultimate disaster of this people is attributable to failure in this matter alone. Let Christians take note, for there is a wide context of this law in the New Testament and in 'Christian' history, particularly today in the history of Israel, not the least of the many tragedies and disastrous consequences that followed their demand — "Make us a king ... *like all the nations*" (1 Sam. 8:5). The demand itself betrayed a *fall* in spiritual life, and the actuality brought discredit, shame, and impotence with the scandal of Saul. The church has so largely fallen into this snare; 'Like unto the world' is its spiritual tragedy and defeat.

b) Isaac was the focal point of divine promise

"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). Remember Paul's comment and interpretation (Gal. 3:16 and context): "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

The universal blessing through Christ was inalienably bound to Isaac, and there was no alternative, be it Ishmael or any other recourse. This is vital to what follows.

c) Isaac was the focal point of God's power and method

In His inscrutable sovereignty and wisdom God deliberately chose a medium of human and natural impossibility. There was the actual physical condition of both Sarah and Abraham (Gen. 18:11, Rom. 4:19) which was one of "as good as dead" in the matter of possible progeny. In birth, in death and resurrection, actually in the one, and virtually in the other, Isaac represented and embodied the supernatural ability of God — "The God who raises the dead" — God's prerogative alone.

Now, all this converged, in the climax of Genesis 22, upon this one issue. It was a question of Abraham's personal interests, *or* of God's satisfaction in the glorifying of His name. The thing was utter. God could not have touched a point which more utterly affected

Abraham *personally* than did Isaac. Everything in life, the justification of the way he had taken, for all future time, impinged upon Isaac. God was resolving this question of His own vindication into an unmistakable significance and implication. Had Abraham any *personal*, private, secret or worldly interests to govern his life? Or could God have everything and provide Himself with a ground for establishing in heaven and earth the honour of His name? God needed His honour vindicated on the stage of the universe. It was just the drama of Job being enacted in the life of Abraham. God's honour had been assailed and challenged. God chose to answer that where it focussed — in human life. Abraham gave God the ground of the naturally impossible.

It was his utter abandon to God's honour and glory that led to the supreme title by which God called him: "Abraham my friend" (Isa. 41:8). God did not abandon His demand when He arrested the uplifted hand and knife. It was — in heart — done. But the principle of Calvary must be preserved, and Jehovah-Jireh meant that God provides *Himself* with what He requires, and He secures it substitutionally in His Son. His Son is God's full supply to Himself in life, death, and resurrection.

The cross (the altar) is the

- a) Climax of two issues. Our own or God's satisfaction.
- b) Birthplace of all divine sufficiency.
- c) Guarantee of God's abiding faithfulness.

2. Moses

"And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-Nissi" (Ex. 17:15). May we recall the three governing factors in this consideration which we mentioned in our last chapter:

- a) The predominant factor in all the Bible, as human history in relation to God, is the vindication of the Lord's honour as bound up with His name.
- b) God's way of doing this is by putting everything upon a supernatural basis, exceeding all natural possibilities.

- c) God has determined to do this in the place where His honour and glory have been most immediately and definitely challenged and assailed, that is, in man. (See the episode of Job).

This latter is *the* very meaning and explanation of the incarnation.

In Abraham we saw the utter test of interests. We now pass to Moses and the battle with Amalek. We are going to take quite seriously the marginal note, because we believe this to be accurate and, as later history proves, the very key to the situation. That marginal note reads: "Because there is a hand against the throne of the Lord" (Ex. 17:16 ASV margin). Let us analyse this event in both its literal and its symbolical features.

a) Amalek

The first adversary *on the way* to the inheritance. It is a spontaneous withstanding of God's purpose in a redeemed people. There had been the terrific battle in Egypt for their

redemption in its initial stage. Now it is more than their redemption initially. It is the *great purpose* of it. That purpose is not only a people for God, but *a heavenly people in dominion*. As we saw, the spiritual seed of Abraham — "which seed is Christ" — is that 'Seed' referred to by God in the Garden which is to bruise Satan's head, and of which Isaiah spoke when he said, "He shall see his seed" (Isa. 53:10). It is the 'Seed', personal and corporate, 'receiving the kingdom' and in dominion. To this 'Seed', in foreshadowing, promise, and prospect, there is persistent and vicious hostility and obstruction. Amalek is clearly seen to be 'a hand against the Throne'. The evil forces behind world systems know quite well the significance, for their dominion, of a heavenly people in prosperity. Saul lost his *throne* through compromise with Amalek, and David, the true king, moved up to the throne when Samuel "hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord" (1 Sam. 15:33).

Amalek represented some aspect of Satan's kingdom obstructing the purpose of God. Some have thought that Amalek symbolised commercialism. There is no proof of this, but there are few things

more obstructive and inimical to the church's spiritual progress than commercialism. It has straddled the path of the church and insinuated itself into every aspect of its work with most disastrous consequences.

b) The supernatural realm

The actual aspects of this battle were below in the plain. The real issues were fought out above. It was, in type, a real instance of warfare "in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

The church has lost much of its effectiveness, and the enemy has gained much of his, because this secret of corporate governing in the heavenlies above and behind the scenes has been lost. Indeed, because its life and activity has become so largely on the earth-level, the horizontal, and its heavenly position usurped, it fights either a losing or a ding-dong battle with the world and the "world-rulers of this darkness".

We have repeatedly emphasized that when God moves for His name, He puts both the issue and the instruments onto a supernatural basis. This is so evident in the instance before us. Joshua was a good, stout-hearted fellow, but he was no match for Amalek without supernatural position and resources.

c) The altar and the Name — Jehovah-Nissi: "The Lord my banner"

In an army the banner, or standard, is the symbol of the honour, glory and pride of the army. It is also the symbol of the throne. Jehovah-Nissi as the Banner simply means that the Lord has *all* the glory and honour. His name and its honour are vindicated. The altar is ever the symbol of God having everything. After Calvary the supremely potent factor in the church's life, work and warfare was the name (See the book of Acts).

3. Gideon

"Then Gideon built an altar there ... and called it Jehovah-Shalom"

(Judges 6:24). If it is true that the all-governing concern of God is the honour of His name, then, all who are called into fellowship with Him are called into that concern. It becomes the motive and reason for their life.

It is in His Son, Jesus Christ, that the name of God and its honour are fully vindicated.

- a) His coming into the world was pre-eminently for this.
- b) He lived and worked with this supremely in view.
- c) He died for this. It is culminated and comprehended in the cross.

The Christian is comprehended by the Name

- a) The Christian's life begins by believing into the Name.
- b) He is baptized into the Name.
- c) He is called by the Name.
- d) Christians meet together in the Name.

The Name, then, means:

- a) A high and holy calling.
- b) A sacred responsibility.
- c) A vocation and a conflict.

The Name is a transcendent and a supreme name. It puts everyone concerned onto a supernatural basis.

All these elements are found in Gideon — his altar and the Name.

1. In his time the Lord's name was in much reproach and dishonour. The Book of Judges is one of the most terrible books of the Bible. There are parts of it which make us blush to read naturally, but they scandalize us when we see them related to the Lord's people.
2. The Lord is seen moving for the sake of His name. It is essentially sovereign movement, for there is so much to be desired, but lacking in the instruments chosen. The only explanation of God doing anything at all in such condition was His jealousy for His name.

3. Then we have, in Gideon, God's instrument and God's method. Everything in the natural realm, so far as Gideon was concerned, was at a discount. He would well have qualified for Paul's category, "the things which are not". He was of a lesser tribe in Israel. His father's house was the least in the tribe. He was the least in his father's house. Gideon had no official position, no status, no prestige. Neither did he have any conceited ideas as to his own abilities or qualifications. There was an absolute absence of all those things which men have ever regarded as essential to position and importance. Such was God's choice. But that was not the end. God's method with Gideon was one of continual and apparently devastating reduction. See the two strippings and siftings of his army. See the comparison and contrast between the enemy's forces and Gideon's three hundred. See the means to be employed for the assault: the pitchers, lamps, trumpets, swords and shouts. It is a story of the odds, humanly speaking, all being on the side of the enemy.
4. We have to focus much attention upon a certain vital point. It is the crisis upon which so very much would hang. Everything in stark reality was centred upon the crisis of committal; it was no small thing for Gideon to contemplate the big objective job in view. But there was involved an exacting demand which he well knew would cost him dearly. There was that compromising situation in his own home. That idol and that other altar! In the very background and base of his operations there was that which could sabotage his whole undertaking. How could he hope to defeat the enemy in the open field when the enemy had a footing in his private life. Such a footing could paralyze his arm. Before the battle could be joined with any hope of success, adjustment had to be made in the private life, the home life. No amount of valour in the field will guarantee triumph if there is a contradiction in the family, the home, the business, in the heart, et cetera, where it is, even at great cost, possible to put it right. We have seen more than one

great ministry, either actual or in prospect, wrecked and lost, because of compromise on the matter of popularity, fear or ambition.

It is important to note that *the name on the altar did not come there after the public battle, but after the private battle and triumph*. The 'Peace' ('Jehovah-shalom') had to be within first!

God was all along sifting down to reality. No false factor, no lie could be allowed in the foundation, or, under stress, the whole structure would collapse.

But, when *all* is said, what was *the* fundamental and all-inclusive issue? It was undoubtedly and manifestly the glory and honour of the Lord's name. Truly, everything in this instance was removed from man's ground and put firmly on God's. There is nothing natural here, but it is all supernatural. In such a day and condition the honour of God's name and its vindication called for God alone. So it ever will be. Unto this we can see clearly the elements of the cross at work, not least in Gideon. But through the cross, the altar, there is victory and 'Jehovah-Shalom', Peace.

JEHOVAH-SHALOM

"And he built an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there" (Gen. 26:25).

"Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-Shalom, that is, The Lord is peace" (Judges 6:24).

The altar and the Name. It is impressive and significant how these two things are repeatedly linked together in the Scriptures. It was so in the case of Abraham when, having been commanded by the Lord to offer his son, Isaac, at the point when the offering was about to be consummated, his hand was arrested, and, looking up, he saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns, and was commanded to offer it in the place of his son. Then we are told that Abraham called that place, that altar, Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord provides; the Lord, the Provider for His own requirements.

In Exodus 17 we have the account of Amalek coming out against Israel, Moses ascending the mount and interceding while the battle went on in the valley or in the plain, Aaron and Hur holding up his hands until the victory was won. And then we are told that Moses built an altar and called the name of that place Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord the Banner, the Lord triumphant for His people in His own wars.

And now we come to this instance in the case of Gideon, the altar built, the name given — Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord is peace. The significance of that in this connection is going to occupy our attention.

We have these three wonderful things in connection with the

altar and the Name: God's satisfaction in His own provided sacrifice; God's help in the warfare of His people and help unto victory; God's glory in the recovering of His testimony¹ gathered again into the altar and the Name.

And how real these spiritual meanings are when we come to the cross of our Lord Jesus. Truly it is the altar for the Name where God finds His full satisfaction in His own provided sacrifice, satisfaction for all His own requirements and demands, where in Christ crucified the greatest banner ever set up was erected, the greatest victory given. Jehovah-Nissi is at Calvary. And where the testimony of the Lord is recovered, the glory of the Lord is secured, and that being so it is peace, Jehovah Shalom. All that focuses upon and is gathered into the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And you see the inclusive and the transcendent factor is the Name of the Lord. It is all for the Name; the Name it is that governs everything. The place or centre of the vindication of the Name is the altar or the cross.

The need for the vindication of the Lord's Name

Now, as I have said, we are taking up the third of these three instances, that of Gideon, his altar, and the Name which he proclaimed there. This time where we meet Gideon is indeed a momentous time. There was a tremendous work to be done. The thing in view was no small matter at all. It was nothing less than the extrication of the Lord's Name from a desperate and grievous situation. His Name had become involved in such a situation by the very people who were the people for His Name. To get that Name out clear in glory and vindication demanded the getting that people of the Name out, and the writers of these narratives are truly led when they give us the details which show how great a matter it was. The Midianites, the Amalekites, all the children of the East,

¹ The author presupposes that the reader knows what he means by 'recovery of God's testimony'. It is terminology that is typical of the conferences held in Kilcreggan and at the Honor Oak centre in London between 1930 and 1970. Basically it represents the idea that the Church of Jesus Christ in general needs revival. See chapter six and the editors' notes on this topic on the '[About the Altar and the Name](#)' page of The Golden Candlestick website

bringing up their hordes like a cloud of locusts. That was the situation. Out of that the Name of the Lord had to be brought, had to emerge, in honour and in glory. To secure a people for the Name of the Lord to be the very instrument and vessel of His vindication, that is no small business. It is a tremendous thing. The enemy is a combination of the spiritual and temporal kingdoms, in other words, a combination of the whole, mighty, vast kingdom of Satan in the unseen, with this world. That is the situation. Paul tells us that it is hosts — the same word — hosts of wicked spirits with which the church has to contend.

The state of the Lord's people

Let us look more closely at this situation. The situation in which the Name of the Lord was involved was one where the people of the Name were at the mercy of their enemies. They were in a state of weakness before their enemies so that their enemies were doing more or less as they liked with them, and they could not withstand, to say nothing of overcome. Weakness characterised the people of the Name, and that is a contradiction to the Name. If the Name is the Name of infinite power, of almightiness and supremacy, it is a terrible thing for people bearing that Name, called into fellowship with that Name, to be at the mercy of the forces of evil, so weak that they cannot stand their ground; they have to flee hither and thither. It is a terrible story, this, caves and holes and seeking to hide themselves from their enemies, anything to avoid the consequences of this state of defeat and impotence.

Perhaps some of you would react to that by saying that surely there is nothing to correspond with that today, and it is not my intention to embark upon a proof that it is so. There are on this earth evidences not a few and not small that the Lord's people are not able to hold their ground against the enemy, but are having to give way, that a state of spiritual weakness exists, speaking quite generally, among the people who bear the Name of the Lord Jesus, which means that they are oppressed before the forces of evil,

having to yield ground. There is a growing consciousness of weakness, defeat, inability to keep possession, or to move on in triumphant procession. We need not spend time to prove it, but there is much evidence that there is something today which corresponds to this situation. But let us go on.

A further state of this people of the Name was that they were in poverty; they were not at all enjoying the wonderful wealth that had been spoken of when they were being led into this very land. Oh, what wealth was described and foretold, and they had in days gone by known something about it, enjoyed something of it, but now they are not conscious of being full of riches, divine riches, a wealthy people, not only able to meet the demands of their own lives, but to have a good margin to give away. No, nothing like that: there was poverty, starvation, food not available. They were not enjoying the milk and the honey; they were not thriving upon the abundance of the finest of the wheat. No, they were starved and hungry.

Is there any truth in those two things, speaking quite generally, in that where multitudes of those who bear the Lord's Name are concerned, not enjoying those riches and the depth of those riches? How many are conscious of having this fulness, this competence, enough and to spare? Is there not a constant seeking to scrape together enough to subsist upon and to scour for something to meet any outside demands and it is pretty poor fare that is being given.

And further, what a state of confusion. They just did not know where they were. Gideon speaks not only for himself but for many a heart in Israel. Why? There was a cry as to the meaning of things. What is it that the Lord means, what is it that the Lord is after, what is the explanation of this state of things? There is bewilderment and confusion, and a terrible lack of cohesion and solidity. They are broken up, scattered, disintegrated.

And finally, without leaders who could speak with such authority as to gather up all these broken fragments of the Lord's people and unify them, a voice of authority, a leadership to consolidate, to rescue from this state. There was no such in Israel.

These were the conditions, and, tragedy of all tragedies, all this right in the land of covenant. They are not exiles now; they are there, it is all there, it is really all to hand, and yet here is the state of things. If the Midianites do represent the commercial element, as they do, remember it was Midianites that bought and sold Joseph, and from then onward we are always finding them in this realm of commercialism, then the resources which belonged to this people of the covenant were being ceded to the Midianites, to the god of this world. This world was taking what belonged to the people of God, and yet it was all there for them.

God's mind to do something for His Name's sake

Now we go on. Gideon comes into view, and Gideon sets forth God's mind to do something about all this. That is where we begin. What is introduced by Gideon is that God does not want this situation, this does not represent what He would have. Moreover, God has a mind to do something about it for His own Name's sake. If all this is contrary to the honour and the glory of His Name, if that Name is involved by such conditions in dishonour and reproach, then God cannot sit still for ever. God cannot accept that. God is of a mind to do something, and Gideon declares that by his very place in history. When we turn to that great list and record of triumphs and men of triumph in Hebrews 11, and the apostle comes to the place where he has exhausted his time and says, 'Time will not allow me to speak in fulness about more', he begins to gather them all up together and he begins with Gideon. The time will not allow him to speak of Gideon, then a number of others, and of them, beginning with Gideon, he says, "who through faith subdued kingdoms". That is Gideon. That is God's reaction, and that is what Gideon stands for, the subduing of kingdoms to the glory of the Lord's Name. So Gideon becomes an outstanding example of the kind of instrument that God would use for the honour of His Name in the rescuing of His people from these conditions, and that is of interest to us. Of course, if I have not carried you with me thus far, we break down

here. If it is possible for you to recognize and agree that, again speaking very generally about those who bear the Name of the Lord Jesus all over the world, conditions such as I have mentioned do exist to some considerable extent, there is weakness, there is defeat, there is a having to yield ground to the enemy, to the kingdom of darkness, there is spiritual poverty and spiritual starvation. Oh, how many letters come our way containing that complaint — ‘We can find no spiritual food.’ I could show you literally without exaggeration volumes of letters which just bear upon that one thing — spiritual food. It is apparently not the experience of very many of the Lord’s people that there is plenty of spiritual food, and it ought to be their experience. I say, if these conditions are recognizable by you, and I am quite sure they must be, then we can go on together, and shall find a very real interest in a vessel, an instrument, which God will use to meet that situation, to save His Name from the dishonour which such conditions represent.

The altar the focal point of Gideon’s story

Well, we find the focal point of Gideon’s whole story at his altar. Everything that goes before with Gideon heads up to that altar, and everything that follows afterwards arises from that altar. It is very important for us to recognize that. It is a focal point. It is a terminal point. You can see right up to that time there is uncertainty with Gideon. From that time there is no more uncertainty. At least, uncertainty is steadily giving way, and a mighty strength is taking its place. The altar is the focal point of his whole story, and it will be that of any instrument that God will use in this matter.

Should I stay here to say that God would in our time react more for the glory of His Name against conditions as they are? Well, either we are completely wrong in our fundamental conclusion that the Name of the Lord is in a state of dishonour among His people, or we are left here at this point where we have got to decide one of two things: either God does not care, or He is going to do something. Either He throws the whole thing away as hopeless, abandons it all,

or He is so concerned as to move. I prefer to believe that the latter is the case. The Lord would move, and I believe that this message is intended by the Lord to show how He would move in this time for His Name's sake. That means you will have to be patient to the end.

We have said that the altar was the focal point in all this where the instrument of God was, and is, concerned. You see, the altar was the climax of a battle between Gideon and God. The battle with Midian which was coming had to be pre-fought out and settled in the heart of Gideon. It is no use turning out on a situation if the thing is not settled inside. And this was a real battle.

God's sovereign choice of an instrument

What was the nature of this battle? Firstly, God had sovereignly chosen an instrument, never explaining Himself, for sovereignty never explains itself. It acts on its own rights and does as it will without giving any explanation. Sovereignty had chosen an instrument.

The instrument's consciousness of inadequacy

Over against the sovereign act of God, Gideon had a lot of difficulties. There was the greatness of the task, infinitely beyond his power and resources, something that he just could not contemplate. The greatness of the task on the one side. The weakness of the instrument on the other side, and in between the spiritual state of the people. And one more thing — was the Lord really concerned? "If the Lord is with us, why then is all this befallen us?" Is the Lord really concerned? Now, you see, all those elements can create a first-class internal conflict with the Lord. Here is a tremendous thing to be done. Does the Lord really mean to do it? If so, what kind of an instrument must the Lord have with which to do it, and in my judgment — this is how Gideon is reasoning — in my judgment He needs something better than the vessel He has chosen. Look at the state of things, look at the condition of the Lord's people, how wide-

spread it is, how far-reaching, how almost universal, how deep and terrible it is, how they are involved, yes, how hopeless it all seems. Does the Lord mean to do anything with that? Have you ever had a question like that? I beg to suggest that the more you know of the spiritual state of things in Christianity, the more that question will press in upon you. Does the Lord mean to do anything with this, and can the Lord do anything? And if so, the Lord must have a very special and wonderful instrument with which to do it, and I do not see where that instrument is.

These are the elements of the conflict between Gideon and the Lord. Deep down underneath he had a misgiving — which amounted to this — is this really the Lord? Is some terrible, tragic joke being played upon me? Am I being led to believe something that is not the Lord? Am I being drawn into a deception, involved in something which in its outworking must result in awful tragedy? Now I am not exaggerating, you will see. Does the Lord really, really mean this? “Go in this thy might, and save Israel from the hand of Midian, smite the Midianites as one man.” Does the Lord mean this? And it amounted to this: can God be really trusted? This was not a matter of the fact and existence of God.

The story of the twofold testing by the fleece was not a testing as to whether God existed. The Lord never submits Himself to such tests as to whether He is. “He that cometh to God must believe that He is” (Heb. 11:6). But this testing by the fleece was as to God’s purpose and the means God would use to realize His purpose. It had to do with God’s choice, the difficulty of an instrument feeling itself to be what it was: altogether disqualified, altogether without anything in itself to justify such a choice of God, but so much that seemed to contradict that. Has God really chosen this instrument? Is this the kind of means that God will use? It was on that that Gideon needed the assurance. It had to do with choice, which is exactly the same battle that had to be fought by Moses and by Jeremiah. “Oh, Lord, I am not eloquent”, said Moses in the battle between himself and the Lord over His choice for that tremendous work. ‘I am the wrong man for this job. You have made a mistake,

you need something different from me, something better than I am. Lord, you have come to the wrong door, the man you are after does not live here.' It was the same with Jeremiah: 'I know not how to speak; for I am a child', and how often in his life did he cry out from the deep, unbearable sense of this that God had made a mistake in calling him to that work.

God's answer

What evidence did the Lord give? What would Gideon and such as Gideon really expect? Well, I know what I would expect. Have you not often — feeling your insufficiency and unfitness, the impossibility of your ever counting for anything in the interests of the Lord — have you not sought the Lord to give you some mighty proof, some answer that no one can mistake? And what has been in your mind? Oh, nothing but thunder and lightning will be adequate for this! What was the answer? Dew, that is all, dew. There were times when the Lord answered in thunder and lightning. He did in the days of Samuel, and with it destroyed their harvest. He did on Carmel with Elijah, but thunder and lightning have to do with judgment, not mercy, and there was no call for thunder and lightning with Gideon. It was mercy that was needed, and dew is the symbol of mercy.

What is the Lord's answer to true-hearted, honest-hearted, sincere children of His? It is not in the earthquake and the thunder and the lightning and the cleft heaven. The Lord comes back to us, as He has often come back to me in this way, and has said, 'I am just going on, that is all.' That is the dew. 'I am just going on.' The dew silently, imperceptibly coming. But what a mighty power is in the dew to refresh the earth. You go out to the East and see whether the dew is a factor or not. Dew is often a matter of life and death. It is unction. The Lord's answer so often to us is 'Oh no, I am not going to give you mighty cataclysms and demonstrations and upheavals to prove that I am with you. I am just going on, that is all, quietly, like the dew, going on.' And has it not been like that? We have wanted those terrific things to happen to prove the

Lord was with us, but He has just gone quietly on, and that is how He answered Gideon. He was going on in a strength that did not require an earthquake.

The Name of the Lord triumphant in Gideon

Well, what did it amount to? It amounted to this, that the Lord had to defeat Gideon before He could defeat the Midianites. And the Lord defeated and subdued Gideon, and the altar was the mark, the point, at which Gideon was defeated and subdued. That is, all the quarrelsomeness, all the disputing and the questioning, all this that was going on in Gideon's heart was silenced at that point, and the Name of the Lord came up triumphant at the cross over *this* man. I have all the time in mind the collective instrument, for this may not all be true of any individual, that every one of us in the same sense is a Gideon, but we may be part of a collective instrument, with which the Lord would meet the need of the time. The principles hold good for the collective as for the individual, and until you and I have had our arguments quietened, our fretfulness brought to rest, all our wonderful inclination for debating with the Lord silenced; until our souls are subdued at the cross, the Lord cannot go on with that great thing that He is after. Victory or defeat rest upon our relationship with the Lord in submission and faith in Him.

'By faith Gideon subdued kingdoms.' Gideon's faith was the issue of a battle of minds between his mind and the Lord's mind. That battle settled, and Gideon came to the place where the Lord, if He wills, can. I am no better a being than I was before all this. I am no more use in myself than at the beginning, but I have come to the place where I no longer put anything in the way of the Lord. The Lord can do it if He wills. I capitulate to the Lord, and I know the Lord is able. Get settled there, and you have got the Midianites in your hand; you have got the enemy at your mercy.

The rest? — oh, what a victory it was, how easy. This shows that the real battle is in ourselves. All the time the Lord is having to fight us before He can get us to the place where He can fight

through us. It is true. There is so much to be subdued and silenced. The Lord's Name has to be honoured in our own hearts before it can be vindicated on the battlefield. The enemy must have no ground in us if we are going to defeat him outside.

That was the state of the people. Is Gideon a representative of the people? The Lord has to overcome His own people before He can overcome their enemies. Perhaps you need me to give you light on that, but the more we come up against the situation as it is, the more we are aware of how terrible things are, the more we find we have got to overcome in our own heart of doubt, of questions, of quarrelling with the Lord about it, all that sort of thing has to be subdued. When that is settled it is a very real battle and this battle in our own hearts, not as to relationship with the Lord but as to what the Lord means to do, and as to our part in it. All that provides plenty of occasion for having things cleared up to give the Lord a straight way.

So Gideon represents in this way the kind of instrument that the Lord will use. It must be an instrument that has no questions where the Lord is concerned, no debate with the Lord, no doubt about the Lord. It must have a very settled position as to what the Lord means, that is, what He intends to do, and that whole battle has been given away, thrown away, in past years by a kind of interpretation of hopeless, helpless, final ruin of the church, and we can expect nothing better. Now the Lord is only going to be concerned with individuals here and there. As to church truth, that is a phrase that is used, well, there is no hope in that connection. That is handing the whole thing over; it is abandoning the honour of the Lord's Name. The Lord may only have three hundred who represent His mind fully, but He will have them. That comes later. We have to be quite sure and have certainty in our hearts. That is where the Lord begins.

THE RECOVERY AND CONTINUANCE OF GOD'S TESTIMONY TO HIS NAME

We resume our occupation with this matter of the recovery of the honour and glory of the Lord's Name in His people. A well-fed people is what the Lord wants for His glory, a people who are sure, have confidence and certainty, and not all the time dogged and dominated by questions which disturb and unsettle and rob them of their sense of security. They have got the great answer in their hearts, that is, they know where they stand and why they stand there; there is an assured life. And further, the Lord's Name is certainly glorified in a united people. His honour has been sorely and grievously destroyed by the breakup of the Lord's people and their scatteredness. It seems that the great prayer of our Lord recorded for us in John's gospel chapter 17 very largely centred in that one thing, that the unity of the Lord's people should be the great contributing factor to the glory of His Name. The Lord Jesus in that prayer repeatedly referred to the Name. "Keep them in thy name." It was for the Name's sake. Now to have a people like that is not just idealism, a vain hope, but something very near to the Lord's heart, for, as we said, Gideon in the very first place sets forth the fact that the Lord wants it otherwise and moves to have it otherwise, and Gideon brings into view the movement of the Lord to change that state of things for His Name's sake. So we went on to see, to look at, Gideon as the kind of instrument that the Lord will use for the recovery of the honour of His Name by bringing about these Name-honouring conditions among His people.

The ground on which God's sovereignty works

At that point we take things up It is a matter, then, of the recovery and continuance of the testimony of the Name of the Lord. While Gideon on one side does set forth the sovereignty of God, as we were saying, on the other side he indicates the ground on which that sovereignty works. It is not a contradiction to say that, while God acts in absolute sovereignty, He does look for certain things to bring that sovereignty into action. Even the sovereignty of God, where God's people are concerned, demands certain conditions, and those conditions are to be found, indicated at least, in the case of Gideon, this representative instrument of God's honour.

Spiritual youth

Now I am going to say some things which come out of a very real exercise of my own heart and which I feel to be of very great importance, and it centres in the first thing about Gideon. Gideon was a young man. In saying that and what it implies, we really do get to the point of God's reactions, God's recovery and continuance of His testimony, the honour and glory of His Name. What is true in nature is true in the realm of things spiritual — the great factor and principle of spiritual use. The law of nature is ever fresh reproduction. As soon as any organism in nature ceases to reproduce, death has commenced, and death is the law. The law of life is reproduction. God having once created, does not create a second time. He proceeds by reproduction, not by fresh creations. Every new generation is meant by God to embody the past values brought into freshness. No new generation is a new creation. Creation and generation are two different words belonging to two entirely different things. I think some young people think that they are a new beginning. They are not. They are to be the gathering up and carrying on of what has been, but to gather it up and to carry it on in freshness. They are to be the sum of what has gone before but brought back again to its primal freshness. That which is past, if

you like, old, I repudiate that word, but for the sake of explanation I use it, is kept fresh by new generations.

Now, this has two sides, the side of ourselves, we who are a passing generation. Some of us are a passing generation, but if you are included in that, listen. Our freshness and life will be just in so far as we equip the next generation. If we hold things to ourselves — and oh, what tragedies are resultant from old Christians keeping everything to themselves, old servants of God still hanging on, keeping it in their own hands, the thing will die, and die with us, and we are bringing things to death. This, of course, is the spiritual law of the blessing of families. Everything has a spiritual law behind it in God's mind. The blessing of families is, on the one side, to keep the old people young. Find the old people who have no young people around them, and they are old indeed, they are older than they ought to be. You might sometimes feel that you must qualify that. The young people have a way of wearing you out, but nevertheless the principle holds good. It is a divine principle. The blessing on families on the one side is to rob old people of their age, to stop them getting old. That is the principle, that is the law, that is the divine thought. A mark that God has not come to an end, is not finishing up, He means to go on, is that He brings young people in. My older friends take note of that. Don't be jealous of the young people. Do not feel that they are getting in your place and you are having to hand everything over to them, and they are being made much of. We are getting old, some of us, we are seeing the day of our departure drawing near, and we can become weak, we can lose our freshness. That thing can creep on us and begin to bring us into severe limitation. We need something to save us. We need to be delivered, or, as I have said, we may cling to things as they are, and in so doing bring in death. What is our salvation? What is the renewing of our youth? What is the way out of that sense of an end pending, and growing limitation? It is to equip and provide for the generation that follows, to do everything in our power to see that the thing is passed on to them and that they are ready to take it up, not to suspect their youth, not to criticise them because they

are young, not to do what certain people evidently were inclined to do regarding Timothy, and the apostle had to say "Let no man despise thy youth" (1 Tim. 4:12).

When I first started ministry, I was quite a young man, and I had to assume responsibility for a church, and there were some old men who were saying, 'But he is so young', but I had a champion among them who said, 'But he is getting over that every day!' That is a better attitude, is it not? Yes, let me repeat, a mark that God is going on and means to go on is that He brings on young people. Thank God, we are not going to die, if this gathering is true to that. But, you see, it is not years, after all, that govern. Years are not the criterion; spirituality is the criterion. That need not be a matter of years at all. There are some people old in years who are babes spiritually.

But let us turn to the other side. A new generation must succeed in an inward way to that which is passing. I underline certain words — *in an inward way*. The young people, the followers on, must succeed those who have carried the testimony of the Lord before them. They must succeed, not officially, but spiritually, inwardly. Here is the rigid law of the Bible, and it is principle again. There is always something deeper than what is on the surface of anything that is in the Bible. That rigid law of the Bible in the penalty of dishonouring and repudiating parents. There were few, if any, more rigid laws and penalties in the old dispensation than those connected with children dishonouring, disparaging or repudiating their parents. In those days you had only to do that as a son to your father, and stoning was the penalty; your life is forfeit. Behind that there is a divine principle. The divine principle is this, that a father, a mother, a parent, from the divine standpoint is supposed to have a knowledge of the Lord which is indispensable to their children, and if the children set aside the parent, and despise the very thing that they need for their own life, then their life is forfeit if they despise it. That is strong, but it is true. The Lord does not just take account of any rebellion against parents or disobedience to parents as in itself. He looks at the principle behind it, for when things are on

the divine pattern and level, it is like this, that the children cannot live without the parents, they die without the parents, in the sense that they are absolutely dependent upon what the Lord had already developed and stored up for them in a previous generation.

As I said before, young people are not a new created humanity, but they are generated a fresh expression of humanity with the good that has been before. It is significant in this connection that when Gideon became an old man and the men of the country came to him and said, "Rule over us and be our king" (Judges 8:22), Gideon would have nothing of it, but his seven sons were to rule over them. "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children" (Psa. 45:16). It is a principle again, you see, age giving place to youth, but, mark you, in terms of sonship. That means spirituality. Now, young people, have you got that? Do we all grasp that? We are on the way to the recovery of something, the recovery of the Lord's Name. You do not need that I stay to discuss how, on the one hand, that which is spiritually old and worn out and finished with takes from the glory and honour of the Lord.

Let me put that in another way. The Lord's glory and honour is expressed in perennial youth. You do not need me, on the other hand, to argue that if young people repudiate the older and take hold and begin to govern and rule and arrange the things of God's house as though everything began with them and ended with them, how much dishonour has been brought to the Lord by that. No, these are spiritual things to be taken note of, and perhaps they will be helped out by what I have yet to say this evening.

Humility

Let us look at some of the qualities in Gideon upon which the divine sovereignty operated, some of the qualities which marked Gideon, a young man, and here we find a tremendous amount of spiritual maturity. And what were the marks of spirituality and spiritual maturity in this young man? The first was his humility, and humility is the primary mark, the hallmark of spirituality. What a lot

of history is so often required before the Lord gets that in His people and in His servants. In Gideon we find no pride of person. Far from thinking anything of himself, he thought very little of himself. Read the story again. He had no pride of family. "My family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." He could take ten servants, all the same, out of his father's house. It seems to me that from the story about the men of the city and Joash that Joash did stand for something; he had a position, he had an influence. It was Joash who had that altar to Baal, it was Joash who had that Asheroth (grove), it was to Joash's Asheroth and altar that all the men of the city came to worship in the early morning. And yet Gideon had no pride of family, whatever there was there. The point, of course, is this. If you did not have ten servants or even one or anything at all of place, prestige, recognition, influence, you might say, 'Well, of course, it is only becoming under such circumstances to be humble.' But he said, "I am least." He could point to no accomplishments, no degrees, no successes, in the military, the academic, scientific or any other realm. He had no pride of achievement, or pride of ambition, or trace of any of these things, and certainly no spiritual superiority. He did not point the finger at the other people and say, 'Look at them, look at the mess they are in, look at their condition, I am different!' He just put himself among them all, he was one with them in their state, he was involved in their condition; there was no spiritual superiority.

Young men, young women, not because you are young are you going to succeed to the responsibility of the Lord's testimony, not because you have got life before you are you going by the Lord to be pushed into things, given recognition and place. No, it will be like this. Of course, we have often heard people say, when perhaps we have expected something more of the young than we should, that we must not put old heads on young shoulders, but the Lord does and requires it. You have got to take up that which has gone before about this state of things, this humility, and you have to begin there and go on there. If there is any mark about any of us of pride of person, achievement, position in spiritual superiority, in

looking down on others and criticising, judging and condemning, the Lord will not do as He did with Gideon when it says that the Lord looked on him. The Lord will not look on us if it is like that. We will not come into His view. That can never bring glory to His Name. Oh, may I appeal to you to guard against it like a plague. It is not our business to let it be known that we disapprove of people. It is our business to find a basis on which we can help them. We may in our own heart of hearts feel bad about certain things where they are concerned, but that is to stay there and not to come out in our attitude, looks and words and our attempts to tell them where they are wrong in their associations and all the other things. That is not our business. Humility is to find a point of spiritual helpfulness and work on that. If you will take that to heart, you may be found within view of that divine sovereign action to bring glory to the Lord's Name, to recover His testimony.

Diligence

The next thing we find about Gideon was his industriousness. Gideon was threshing out corn in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. Very little seemed possible. Most people had fled to caves and holes. Looking out on the situation the question might have been asked, 'Well, what can be done? We cannot do anything', and because of the situation they might have just drawn back and said, 'Well, it is no use trying to touch this. The enemy has got us so strongly entrenched, so widely spread over, there is so little for the Lord, and so little that can be done' — paralysed and impotent because of the apparent impossibility of doing anything. But Gideon was not so. Not much could be done, but Gideon set himself to do even the least that could be done. As he looked out on the situation which was so difficult, he said, 'Well, at least I can do something, a little, over against this situation.' The Lord took note of that. It was right there over against the winepress where Gideon was doing that that the Lord came and looked on. I wonder if it was because of that that the Lord said, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of

valour." I am certain the Lord is with no slothful person. Diligence is a very great thing with the Lord. "In diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord", says the apostle (Rom. 12:11), though that may be in a very limited and cramped capacity. It is the spirit that the Lord looks upon, and it was the spirit of Gideon which was doing all that could be done, however little that might be. The Lord takes note of that. A gesture is enough with the Lord. Whether you make for the armchair directly you enter the room; it is enough, the Lord does not look in that direction. You see what I mean. I do not mean that literally. It is a gesture, whether you are inclined to be a shirker, to evade, to get out of, to skirt round some responsibility, or whether you are alive and alert for anything. The Lord looked upon him. The margin says, "The Lord turned towards him."

Gideon's concern for others

Further, Gideon's concern for others. Of course, it is a part of what we have just said. He looked and he said, 'These people are starving, the enemy is taking away their bread, their food, the enemy is doing all he can to see that these people are undernourished and underfed. They are so weakened that they will never be able to lift a hand for their own salvation or deliverance.' And Gideon had a real concern about the starved state of other people and their needy condition. You know how much Paul has to say about that. "Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others" (Phil. 2:4). The outward look. Gideon was not one of those introverts always occupied with himself and his poor situation. Think of a young man and his prospects in a situation like this. But he does not sit down and nurse the adversities that have come into his life as a young man, be sorry for himself, smothering himself with self-pity, drawing attention to himself and his own unfortunate lot. He was not that kind of man, and the Lord does not look towards that kind of person. You can go on like that, and you will not find the Lord turning towards you if you are like that. The Lord will turn towards those who, although their lot is a difficult

one, and God knows that better than anyone else, nevertheless are doing something for the sake of others and are really concerned for others.

See his secret activity and exercise to defeat the enemy for the sake of the Name of the Lord. Gideon seems to me to have been saying, 'I will combat them if I can, I will outwit the enemy if I can, I will spoil their plans if I can. I will see that they have as little success as lies in me.' That is the spirit of the heart.

Exercise of heart

Further, Gideon betrays a real soul perplexity and suffering which is the outcome of real heart exercise. When the Lord comes and says, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour", he instantly answered, 'If the Lord be with us, why is all this come upon us? Why has all that which our fathers told us of the former activities and wonders of God, why is there none of that today?' There was a big 'why' in his heart about the situation. He was exercised about this, he was concerned about this, he was trying to find some explanation, and the situation was creating real pain; I was going to say, real bitterness, and you know there is a kind of bitterness of spirit that is permissible, that is not wrong. If we become bitter and sour against the Lord in rebellion, that is a wrong kind of bitterness, but there was a bitterness in the heart of Hannah, you remember, when she prayed at the temple, and Eli misunderstood the moving of her lips and charged her with drunkenness, and she said, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit" (1 Sam. 1:15), her bitterness was because of the situation in Israel. Have you got anything that corresponds to that? It is so different from a theoretical position. We have all the doctrine and teaching, and we know what people ought to be like, and what they ought to do and what they ought to know and we have the answer to it all. Oh no, if it does not come out of the winepress, it is of no value. It has to come out of the winepress, it has to come out of soul travail where we have had deep exercise in this. To such the Lord will look.

Do believe me, whoever you are, old or young, it has to be like that. Do not go out and think you are going to save the Lord's Name and honour, and deliver His people, by doctrine, by theories, by wonderful interpretations of truth, wonderful vistas of spiritual things. Not at all. The Lord is looking for hearts that are breaking over spiritual conditions. Gideon was sore distressed and perplexed, and was suffering inwardly, and his cry was not the cry of a recalcitrant. It was the cry of a man in trouble. 'Why, oh why, are things like this?'

No background alliance with the enemy

My last word on this subject is about Gideon destroying the enemy in his father's house. We will never destroy Satan and his kingdom, we will never destroy the Midianites, if privately behind the scenes, in the background, there is some complicity with Satan's kingdom, and sometimes, no, always, the father's house is inside here. Adam has his residence here, and Adam brought about complicity with Satan, and that is inside our own souls. We know it. How easy it is to listen to Satan, to agree with Satan, to be carried away by his arguments. There is something inside of us which seems to be in alliance with the very devil himself. The father's house is here, and until that is dealt with and overthrown, and in the place of Baal's altar, the Lord's altar is erected, ah, more than that, the very thing that belongs to Baal is brought and made the thing for the glory of God. That is being more than conquerors, not only conquerors, but it is also taking the enemy's strength and bringing it to the Lord. Before Gideon could go to save Israel and recover the honour of the Lord's Name, something had to be done in the background of his life. He did it, he did it fearfully, he did it in no strong, high-handed way, in self-confidence, self-assertiveness, but in the same meekness which characterised him all along. He takes ten men, and under cover of the night, does it. He may be wanting in something; you may say it is wanting in courage. Well, let it be what you like, but it was done. Day or night, it was done, and the

thing is, it has to be done. But when we have said that, what is the motive of all this, because these are not just things in themselves?

They are all motivated, governed, by a tremendous dynamic which is jealousy for the Name of the Lord. It is the Lord's Name. This state of things is dishonouring to the Lord. This, whatever it is, however little that can be done, must be done for the sake of the Name of the Lord. It is not honouring to the Lord for me to accept this situation and sit down and be passive and placid about it. The Name of the Lord requires that I do something, governed by the honour of the Lord's Name. Oh, have a heart for that Name! We must see the Lord's people fed. We must see them enjoying the wealth of their inheritance. We must see them on their feet, standing up, strong. We must see them brought together, we must see them in a state which glorifies His Name, not because we want to be in Christian work, not a great enterprise and undertaking, not because we want to see something flourishing in which we have a part, but for the sake of the Lord. Oh, the Lord give us a heart for His Name, looking on everything as through His Name. Does this honour the Lord's Name? Is this glorifying to the Lord's Name, is this worthy of the Lord's Name? My relationships with others, everything. Is this glorifying to the Name of the Lord? If not, then if we want the Lord to be with us, and the Lord to make use of us individually and together with others of His people as a vessel, we must be after this kind, a vessel after the order of Gideon. And looking at Gideon, you might, if you took his estimate of himself, feel that he was rather a poor thing, but remember there were those things which the Lord regarded as of tremendous importance, upon which His sovereignty could encamp, and these were the things.

CALLED ACCORDING TO PURPOSE

Just by way of continuing, may I bring to you these words from Judges 6:11,12,14:

"And the angel of the Lord came, and sat under the oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite; and his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour ... And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and save Israel from the hand of Midian: have not I sent thee?"

And I want to link with that words which are among the best-known words in the New Testament: "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are *called according to His purpose*" (Rom. 8:28).

Gideon does very truly fit into that. He was a real example of being called according to purpose. I have but one particular emphasis and note in my heart at the moment, but I feel it to be a very important and vital one. It has to do with this matter of being "called according to His purpose". We have seen that God was certainly moving according to purpose when He came and sovereignly called Gideon, and God is still moving according to purpose. As in the days of Abraham, Moses, Gideon, David, or Elijah, or any other, no more then than now until the purpose is reached and fully realised, God will still be moving according to purpose and choosing according to purpose. The purpose is comprehensive and quite clearly defined. Through one brief letter the apostle Paul has

given us comprehensively and definitely the purpose. We are not now going to dwell

upon the purpose now, but rather upon the calling according thereto.

The ultimate purpose to govern all

The purpose is the ultimate of all God's activities. It is the ultimate of the initial apprehending of lives and calling into fellowship with His Son in what we variously call conversion or being saved or being born again. However we put it, it is the initial movement of God in bringing us into relationship with Himself in Jesus Christ, but the purpose is more than that. It is the ultimate of all the progressive preparation, training and discipline of those who have been brought into that relationship with Himself. These are not things or ends in themselves. All this beginning and continuation of the Lord in lives is moving on according to purpose. The great need, where you and I and all the Lord's people are concerned, is to really become gripped and mastered by that fact. It is as though the Lord would come to us and say, 'Now stand at My side and look right on to the end, to the ultimate; look with Me right over all time and all vicissitudes to the end and see with me a universe peopled with those who are just showing forth, manifesting forth, My glory, My eternal glory.' "Called ... unto his eternal glory" (1 Pet. 5:10). That runs alongside "called according to His purpose". "Called ... unto His eternal glory". Now the Lord says, 'Do you see, that is the ultimate, that is the purpose, the showing forth of My glory in a people.' He would perhaps say, 'But, of course, there will be different degrees of glory; there will be one glory as of the sun, another glory as of the moon, another glory as of the stars; there will be differences in glory and of glory. Those differences will depend entirely upon the people concerned. How much glory there will be in and manifested through and by those people will depend entirely upon how much their hearts are set upon My glory, how far their hearts are undivided hearts, pure hearts in this sense that there is no mixture, no

two things which cannot be reconciled. That is purity of heart, and, "blessed are the pure in heart". He would say that.

Purpose within purpose

And then He would say to us, 'That is the end. Have you got that vision? You see the purpose.' If you are called according to that purpose, then He would say, Now look around at the many who have not yet been brought into that initial relationship with the purpose, and then look upon all those who are the Lord's, and what do you see, how much glory do you see and how much going on to glory?' Ah, how much there is very contrary to the glory of God. 'Now then', He would say, 'although I have called you according to My ultimate purpose, I now call you to some situation which exists which is not in line with that ultimate purpose in order that you may be used to bring it into line.' That is purpose within the purpose. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts 7:2); the God of glory, the initial step to get a people. That step was taken with Abraham but look at the seed of Abraham in Gideon's day. Not at all in line with the great purpose revealed to, and intended through, Abraham.

Particular callings

Look at this strange thing. He called Abraham with the whole purpose in view. Now He must call him because of something that has interrupted the realization of the full purpose, something that has arisen, some contingency, digression, or declension on the part of the called. And so the Bible is just full of this — shall we call them — intermediate callings, occasional specific callings within *the* calling, this purpose which has become a necessity in the light of the whole final purpose. Do you see the position? The Bible is full of these particular callings. Moses is one example, Joshua another, and so you go on, callings within the calling. Not one of you here would say that the Lord's people as a whole are right in the main

line direction and way of the eternal calling, of the glory. You would rather think, 'Oh no, there is a very great deal that is not only short of the glory of God, but contrary to the glory of God.' We were trying to stress that in chapter one. When a people are as the people in Gideon's day, weak and defeated before their enemies, starved and poor, without food and wealth; when there is no cohesion and authority under which the people of God are moving like an army with banners, that is something contrary to and other than the purpose of God, and God's movement in sovereignty is to call to deal with that. "Go ... and save Israel from the hand of Midian: have not I sent thee?" (Judges 6:14). That is a specific calling made necessary because of a general declension.

Divine resources bound up with divine callings

But I want to follow that with this: that divine presence, divine support and divine resources are always bound up with divine callings. If you are not in the specific thing that God wants done at any given time, you cannot count upon God's support, you cannot just generalize about this thing, and just heap it altogether, this work of God, without discrimination. At different times, in different realms, God has to act specifically and distinctively, so that, within the compass of His inclusive purpose, there are essential purposes because of situations which have arisen, and He calls in relation to those specific purposes which are the present-time purposes of God, and God supports, sponsors, commits Himself to that. (...) If God wants a thing done and has sovereignly decided that that thing shall be done according to purpose and He can get hold of a people and bring them right into line with that line, God will commit Himself to it and support it and lift the onus of resource from the people and take it on His own shoulders. Yes, the presence of God, the support of God, the resources of God go with His calling. He never — it is an old saying — sends us to warfare at our own charges, He never gives us a commission and then leaves us to find what is required to carry it out. He stands into all the liabilities. If these resources

are withheld, something is wrong. The motive may not be wrong, the intention may not be wrong, the sincerity may be not lacking, but let it be understood that motive and idea and enthusiasm have never been substitutes for divine and specific purpose. David found that out over the bringing of the ark on the Philistine cart. He made a very serious discovery by a very tragic happening. He found that the responsibility rested upon him for what happened. No, the purpose of God must govern.

Everything must be brought into line with the ultimate

Firstly, the whole purpose, the ultimate, must always be in view, and everything must be brought into line with that. It must be brought into line with that. Everything has to be considered and contemplated from the standpoint of how things are going to reach God's end in the manifestation of His glory. And then what would God do now, or what is God wanting to do now? What is God doing now in relation to that? What is the present movement or movements of God to which He has committed Himself? Do you not agree with me when I say that the deepest cry in our hearts is this: 'Oh, Lord, bring me into the thing that You are doing, save me from the things that I am doing for you and want to do for you, and that I think You want done. Don't bring me into things that are a kind of abstract vision, but into what you are doing, that with which you are occupied now.' That is the deepest cry of our hearts, and that is a cry which enters into His heart, that we should be found, not doing a lot of Christian work, hunting round for a job in the work of God. (...) I cannot tell you how badly I feel about that. My understanding with the Lord is this: 'Lord, if you have not got a positive and definite place for me in something that you are doing, I am going to give it all up, I am going out.' It is a very utter thing, this. No one ought to be looking for a job in the realm of God's purpose.

There is a tremendous strength, as well as a tremendous value, in the consciousness of being bound up with a specific calling of God in relation to full and ultimate calling. It is a perfectly wonderful

thing to know, to realize, that you are not just called to be a Christian, nor to be saved from sin and its consequences now and hereafter, and to get to heaven, and all that sort of thing. But there is a great, definite, positive purpose in your being saved, and that purpose relates to nothing in this life, that this life is to be characterized by something quite precise and quite definite in the ultimate purpose of God.

A church purpose

But there is this extra factor, that, while that is true and must be, perhaps I had better stop here for a minute to put in a parenthesis. Let no one think that this implies that they are individual Gideons or Elijahs or any other of this company of the chosen. We are not going to label ourselves Gideons, and this and that and something else. You must realize that God's whole purpose embraces the church, it is a church purpose. It is not just individuals, and in line with that full thought of God concerning the church as the called, you and I are parts of a whole, parts of something comprehensive and inclusive. We are not just individuals. And what I want to impress upon you and I want you to see is this, that it may be that you are called to be a part of an instrument which is collective and corporate, which God is seeking to have for Himself to meet need, and your definiteness of calling is a related one. It is not just an individual and separate one. I know how that appeals to our romantic hearts. I know how as a young man I read about D.L. Moody and read those so well-known words about D.L. Moody that he said that he had heard someone say that if God could get hold of a man, He would show what He would do with and through a man whose heart was wholly towards Himself, and D.L. Moody said, 'I am going to be that man.' Well, that was alright for Moody, and I suppose it is all true. But you know there is an appeal of that to this man. I am going to be a D.L. Moody or something like that. Rather the emphasis is upon the first five words — I am going to be. There is an appeal. No, no. The discipline of that all may come

along the line of our having to be a part of something that God is doing, just a part, but a part, and it is in that whole in a related way that I have to have just as great a sense of being called as I would have if I were singled out as an individual. This is a tremendously important thing. You might have a tremendous sense of vocation if the angel of the Lord came to you as he came to Gideon, singled you out and mentioned you by name and said great things to you personally. Then you would say, 'That is calling indeed, I am called according to purpose.' But we have got to have that in a related and corporate way just as strongly and truly. God has made me a member of the Body which is the vessel of His eternal purpose, and as a member, not as the whole Body, and not as separate from the rest, but as a member my eternal vocation is found. It has to be very real. The ends of God may be reached through companies, through groups, just as much as through individuals. Well, having got that, let us go on.

Succession by divine call

We must be very careful that we bring every phase and every aspect of the Lord's movement towards His ultimate full purpose into line with the great end. The point of that is that God has again and again raised up instruments individual and collective in relation to His ultimate purpose, and by them done something in their day which was quite definite, distinctive and positive, but the thing has become bound up with them, and they have become the beginning and the end of it. And when they have gone, there has been a carrying on of the work that they started, but that distinctive and specific thing has not gone on. It is something now being carried on. Responsibility is lying upon men to carry it on, and then there is a reverting again to this other way of getting support to carry on this and that.

All succession, all continuation, has to be as definitely by divine call as initiation. Therefore succession is not official, it is by anointing. The church does not belong to any one time or age. It is

an eternal thing. It is the eternally elect vessel of the full purpose of God, but the church is the anointed vessel. You cannot carry on the church with an organization. You cannot carry on the church by any human means at all. The church is instituted at the beginning by the anointing, and it has got to go right on to the end by the anointing, so that this continuation of divine purpose requires fresh and ever-fresh anointings where specific vessels and instrumentalities are concerned. You cannot get a conception of the divine purpose, and then say, 'We will have a committee, we will have a board, and we will have an organization, and we will have this and that in order to do this thing that God wants done.' You can have them if you like, but you will find that you have to take responsibility for them for everything. You see, every vessel has to be God-chosen, God-anointed, in relation to something that is eternal, and not of time at all, and not of this earth, and in our place in our relationship to what God may be doing at any given time in our own time, we have got to come under the anointing of the Holy Spirit for that, just as much as those who went before, who were the chosen instrument of God to bring that instrumentality into being. Just as much as they were anointed in their calling, we have to be anointed if that thing is to go on. Heaven has got to come in and carry it to the next stage, we cannot. Nothing is an end in itself. Everything is related to the so much more of God's intention, God's purpose. Your salvation is no end in itself. Any dealings of God with you are not just for the time, they are not an end. Anything that God has raised up and brought into being must not become an end in itself, a crystallized, rounded-off piece of work with a hedge round it, which is something inclusive and exclusive. Everything has to be in line with, and open to, the ultimate fulness of God's purpose. Therefore we must be open to the Lord for something more and something fresh all the time. That went so far, but God intended more. Have you not seen how many a thing started by God and definitely under His anointing, that many an instrumentality serving Him was wonderful, but has just gone so far and stopped, and from that time it has gone no further. It has come under arrest and really

belongs to the past, although it is being kept going. It is living on a tradition, it is living on a past, it is living upon a name and a reputation of the last generation or generations ago. There is nothing right up to date in fulness. Why? Because it was not realized that that was only in line with something more. It was never intended to be something by itself. The ultimate full purpose encompassed that and swallowed it up. It was related. Some of you will perhaps see the point of this more than others, but it is tremendously important that we recognize that any vision that we have must not stop short with the thing that we are in, with the present aspect of things. Any God-given vision which is for a specific time is only related to the ultimate and must give place to the ultimate, and the fuller must come in and swallow it up. Oh, let us ask the Lord to save us from settling down into something less than He intends. There must always be with us this sense, this deep-down consciousness, that we are called according to purpose not yet fully realized. There is a wonderful future with which we are related, and this is not the end of everything. Have you got what we have here before called this sense of divine destiny, this something calling you on, pulling you on, not allowing you to accept anything less than all God means. That is vision in reality. Or does your vision just reside within the narrow limits of a piece of work that you are doing for God, or trying to do for God? Is that your vision? It is not adequate. No, we are "called according to His purpose".

I have read in conjunction with these chapters about Gideon the later chapters of the prophecies of Zechariah. Of course, you wonder how they can be brought together, but they are part and counterpart. Those later chapters of the prophecies of Zechariah still have in view God's full purpose and its realization where Israel is concerned. You are amazed, almost bewildered, at what is said there of God's purpose yet concerning the land and the people. In these prophecies you have the uttermost things said, that all from all over the world shall come and worship at Jerusalem, and if anyone will not come, there will be a curse upon him, upon his cattle and upon all that he has, and it is described in language that

we today can understand better than Zechariah could understand when he penned it. "Their eyes shall dissolve in their socket" (Zech. 14:12). "Their tongue shall consume away in their mouth." Here we have the atomic age. All who will not come to worship the Lord at Jerusalem are going to be involved in it. But I look at the book of Judges, and I say, 'Something has got to happen to get Jerusalem into that position, to get Israel into that state where all will come and worship the Lord at Jerusalem from every nation.'

The point is that Gideon was apprehended in relation to that ultimate. So far as God was concerned, the full vision was still in view when He took hold of Gideon, and it is like that. We may have conditions such as those in the days of Gideon, but the Lord has still got His full purpose in view, and He will lay hold, and say, 'Have not I sent thee, go and thou shalt save Israel from this unto that.' Oh, that there might fall upon us this new sense of divine calling and apprehending in relation to His full purpose, though meanwhile it may be connected with something that is out of line with that purpose, and the purpose where we are concerned within the whole purpose is this. It may be evangelism, it may be to bring in those who are called unto His eternal glory, it may be any aspect of ministry, but it must be in full view of the end. It must be a related thing. It must be under the anointing, and not just some piece of work that we have taken up, are trying to do for God. We must have that sense of tremendous calling, vocation and apprehending, that this is the thing to which God has called me. So many there are who are wandering about and missing the way and are in a state of ineffectiveness because they are in the wrong position; they are trying to do something that God never called them to do. They have seen Christian work is such-and-such, and so they have taken it up and they are trying to do it, but God did not lay hold of them for that.

I wonder if you have grasped the emphasis. "Called according to His purpose", ultimately in its fulness, at present in some ways necessary unto the ultimate. Whatever it is, it has to be this, that you and I know that our lives are apprehended lives. Until we get there and have that consciousness, there will be weakness, loss,

confusion; we have got out of the purpose. The Lord draw us by a mighty new sense into the thing that He is Himself concerned with at this present time.

THE GROUND OF THE PRESENCE AND THE POWER OF GOD

The Lord is concerned above all things for the glory and honour of His Name, and we have been seeing how God's sovereignty and power are always brought into operation in the interests of His Name for no other reason. The honour of His Name is in a people. He has bound up His Name and its glory with a people, and that glory is found in a people in life, strength, wealth, food and oneness. These things spiritually interpreted are things which display His glory in His people. Then in the third place we went on to see that there are certain factors for which God looks as a basis for His work in securing that state in His people. In chapter two we saw the characteristics in Gideon, a typical instrument sovereignly chosen of God for that very purpose of the glory of His Name in His people, and those characteristics of Gideon in relation to God's purpose. In chapter three we were occupied with the fact that God calls instruments specifically according to His purpose, that is, with His glory as the end in view.

Now we shall look at that matter again from a different angle, and I just remind you of the words addressed to Gideon as in Judges 6:12,14: *"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him (Gideon), and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour ... And the Lord looked upon him (turned towards him) and said, Go in this thy might, and save Israel from the hand of Midian: have not I sent thee?"*

I want to read some words that are very familiar to you in the letter to the Philippians:

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:5-11).

The power of weakness

Our occupation will be with the ground of the presence and power of God. If one thing is evident about Gideon, it is that he does set forth very strongly and forcefully the power of weakness. I have on the flyleaf of my Bible something that I wrote there many years ago at a time of perplexity and difficulty in the work of the Lord, and seeking very much to know the way of strength, of power, of wisdom, I came upon this. It is in *The Life of Lilius Trotter*, whose work in North Africa will be known to many of you, and it just met my need.

"So many questions lie ahead concerning the work, and a great comforting came this morning in the 38th chapter of Job about 'the way' of wisdom, and 'the place thereof'. It tells how God finds the way for the wind and the water and the lightning, and it came with a blessed power what those ways are. The way for the wind is the way of the greatest emptiness; the place of the water is the place of the lowest depths; and the way of the lightning — as science proves — is along the line of the greatest weakness. 'If any man lack'. There is God's condition for the inflow of spiritual understanding."

The way of the cross

The ground of the presence and the power of God. Of course, inclusively and pre-eminently the ground is His Name and His jealousy for His Name in the heart of any servant of His, but the way of the power is the way of the cross. The words which we have read, with which we are perhaps too familiar, in that letter to the Philippians, analyze for us the meaning of the cross. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." In other words, let your mentality be the mentality of Christ, your mindedness the mindedness of Christ. Now here we have a wonderful thing. Paul in these words reads the motive of the incarnation and the cross. He reads right back into the glory, into the presence of God where the Son is, and reads the mind of the Son as the decision is arrived at to leave that estate and to come here and take the way of the cross. He reads a motive in the mind of Christ. The motive has evidently sprung from the fact that another name had taken the place of the Lord's Name, His Father's Name. Another name had intruded itself into the place of the Name of the Lord. We know quite well the whole of that story of the one who said, "I will", "I will make myself like the Most High" (Isa.14:14), who sought to make for himself the name above every name. That being the situation, it was not enough for the Son to sit in equality with God in heaven when His Father's Name was dishonoured on earth. He could not be at rest and be comfortable or satisfied. Indeed, He could not endure it, that He should be there in His glory, in possession of that position and that estate, while in the creation another name was being honoured, another name had usurped His Father's Name, and the motive was jealousy for the Name of God, jealousy for God's honour. That lay behind everything. He emptied Himself, and experienced all the other things mentioned here which we are going to look at one by one.

Jealousy for the Name of God

But first of all, notice the incarnation, the cross and the ultimate exaltation above all Names rested upon one thing: jealousy for the Name of God. The great "wherefore ... God highly exalted him" sums up all the steps of the great cycle from the glory back to the glory, but relates pre-eminently to this 'wherefore', 'why-fore'. this kind of mindedness. Unless you have an adequate motive, you will not do all these things. It is of little use to apply this Scripture to Christians, saying, 'Now you ought to have the mind of Christ, and the mind of Christ worked out like this, in this way and this way, and you have to be Christ-like, you have to be Christ-minded. That can bring a tremendous amount of pressure and weight, like a legal obligation, to bear upon Christians. I am not a bit like that, that is not at all my mind, my way. You have to have a motive, a motive that will make you, cause you, to take this path of the cross, a strong enough motive to make it something that you must do, you cannot help doing. That is Christ-mindedness. He could not help it. The constraint of this jealousy for His Father's Name was so strongly upon Him that there is nothing else to do. He must take this way. I am beginning upon this very strong note that there is a very great need in you and in me and in the people of God and servants of God today for more of this terribly fierce jealousy for the honour and glory of the Lord's Name.

A reckoning

Well now, this whole thing commenced with a motive, but that motive led to a reckoning. In the motive was an accounting. It says, He "counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped", to be held on to. A reckoning took place with him. That is the suggestion or implication. On the one side, here am I in a place of equality with God. I have the glory, "the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). I am here in possession of all this. Down there My Father's Name is dishonoured, robbed of its

glory, and another name is put in its place. Is this, my having this position and all this possession and all this glory, of greater importance than My Father's Name being glorified down there? And He came to the conclusion: 'No, it is not. Putting these two things in the balances, My own glory, My own personal position, is of far less importance than My Father's Name being glorified down there.' He weighed it up, one thing against the other, put them both into the balances, and the honour of the Father's Name in the creation with Him altogether outweighed His own glory, His own personal fulness. It was a reckoning. He counted, He reckoned.

When the apostle says, "Let this mind be in you", he sees the wonderful issue, of this, God committing Himself — I think we may say rightly in a way fuller than ever before to His Son. It says, He "gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus (the incarnate Lord)" every knee in the universe shall bow, and call Him Lord of all. In other words, he says, 'If God is going to commit Himself to you, if God is going to presence Himself with you as with His Son, for it is written "and God was with Him" (Acts 10:38), and if the power of God is going to rest upon and work through you, you have got to have a fundamental reckoning.' This is something which every servant of God has to face at the outset, for this, after all, is the thing which constitutes a servant of God. This is the very essence of service.

The essence of service

What is service? What is the essence of service? What is it that makes a servant of God? We talk so much about the Lord's servants; sometimes we substitute the Lord's work. We are concerned and anxious to be in the service of the Lord, and then we think about missionary work and ministry and one thing and another, and this is really what we mean by the service of the Lord, and by being the Lord's servants. But what is the heart and essence of service? It is nothing more, because there can be nothing more, and it is nothing less in truth than bringing glory and honour to the Name

of the Lord. That covers and compasses all service, and that makes the servant of the Lord. We may do a thousand things, but unless they result in the Lord's Name being glorified, it is not service to God. Jesus is the great servant of Jehovah; there never was such a servant of the Lord. He has served the Father as none other has ever served or could ever serve the Father, but how has He done it? He has brought back the Father's Name to its place of honour and glory. He has come down and entered into the dispute with the other name, and now He is far above every name that is named. He has dealt with the challenge to the Father's place, and in that way He is the greatest of all servants. "Let this mind be in you." We have got to weigh all our Christian activities and efforts in this way: how much real glory is coming to the Lord in this? Not, how much am I doing, but how much positive glory to the Name of the Lord is bound up with what I am doing? That is followed out in the fuller analysis of this great statement in the letter to the Philippians.

I was saying that this is something that every servant of God, every aspirant to service for God, has to settle at the outset. Moses made that reckoning. It is said of Moses "accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" (Heb. 11:26). Accounting — he made a reckoning. It was a tremendous reckoning. That involved all the treasures of Egypt, his place, his learning, everything that he had in the palace of Egypt. On the other hand, what he came into with the Israelites. Yet he weighed it all up at the beginning, and accounted before he took his step. 'That is greater riches down there than this. I have weighed these things up, and for me the greater importance is there because it is there that the Name of the Lord is involved. The Lord has chosen that people through Abraham to be the vessel of the glory of His Name. That is my place whatever it costs.' It was a reckoning. And many others made that reckoning, not least Paul. He weighed it all, "what things were gain to me" (Phil. 3:7), and he tabulates them, and you know what they were, everything that the natural heart would be set upon. "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8). The accounting led

to much suffering, affliction and trial, and yet Paul never abandoned that position. To me it is one of the most wonderful things that, with all that he had to suffer and all the consequences of his great decision and reckoning, Paul to the end held on to this: 'It is far better to be here with Christ and have all this than to be back there without Christ having all that.' He weighed it all up.

Now, that is a very serious challenge, this reckoning. You will not come to that conclusion, that mind, and take that step of letting everything else go, all other possibilities and prospects, unless you have got a tremendously strong and high estimate of the glory of God. But if you have an adequate and right conception of the glory of God, and what that glory is going to mean in this universe, you see everything else, however great, as very small in comparison. "I reckon" — I *reckon* that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the *glory* which shall be revealed to us-ward" (Rom. 8:18). "I reckon." He had weighed it up. We are involved in a very great deal of suffering and affliction when we take a stand for the Name of the Lord, for the glory of that Name. It is a very costly stand. We shall only be able to maintain that stand if we have made the reckoning. The Lord Jesus always required such a basic reckoning, did He not? He never deceived anybody. When He called to discipleship and fellowship with Himself, He made it perfectly clear. "You are in for a bad time, I tell you frankly. This way is going to be a very costly way. Don't you make any mistake about it. If a man is going to war, he sits down and counts up his resources. Can I not only make a beginning, but go right through with it? Have I got resources to carry me through? If a man is going to build a tower, he sits down and reckons. Now, have I the means not only to lay a foundation, to make a beginning, but to build this thing? Can I go through with it?" (Luke 14:23-35). In those words, the Lord Jesus was only saying what we are saying now. You have to have a fundamental reckoning over this. This mind that was in Christ Jesus has to be in you, and you have to settle something. This is a thing that has to be settled. It is a battle that seems to spring up again and again, and yet something has to be done about

this. I do want to urge upon you, my young friends, that you are going to have a very difficult time. All hell is going to range itself against you if you take a stand for the honour of the Name of the Lord. You are going to have a bad time, but you have got to reckon. Is it worth it, is that Name worth it? Is that glory worth it? You have to put the things in the balances and get that settled.

An emptying

Well, after the reckoning came the emptying. He “counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself”. Although there is such a difference, both in kind and degree, between Christ and His servants — that is, we can never empty ourselves of that of which He emptied Himself, we never had it, we have not got it, we have no glory that corresponds to His glory — the principle is the same. There is even with us, strange thing, there is with us that which is our personal glory. Poor, wretched things as we are and know ourselves to be, somehow or other it almost takes a lifetime to make us empty of things which are in the Lord’s way, to which we cling, which we count a prize, grasp, hold on to. He emptied Himself, and if the principle were not the same with us as with Him, Paul would never say, ‘Let the same mind be in you.’ The account may be different, but the principle is the same — the emptying.

The whole story of Gideon is a declaration that the vessel must never have any glory of its own. The vessel that God will mightily use must have no personal glory. The glory has to be the Lord’s and the Lord’s alone. The whole story declares that. Take the man himself, take the means that the Lord used for the work. It was a case, as we shall see later, of just reducing, bringing down lower and lower, never allowing anything whatever to come into this business which would contribute to the glory of the instrument. When that thing was done, everybody had to say, ‘Well, that is perfectly marvellous, to think that that could be done with such an instrument, in such a way.’ The Lord was taking precautions: “lest Israel

vaunt themselves". No glory to the vessel. It is the glory of the Name and that glory of the Name is exclusive of all other glories.

I am talking about the ground of the presence and the power of God. "The Lord is with thee, go in this thy might." The presence and the power. What is the ground? It is this: the utter emptying of all personal glory and ground of glorying. Shall we put it the other way, it is the providing the Lord with an utter ground for His own glory. The Lord takes infinite pains to secure that ground, but oh, what a story of weakness, defeat and limitation, simply because men will get their names and reputation in, draw some attention to themselves, call themselves by titles in the work of the Lord, advertise themselves as the great instrument that is going to do this and the other. It is an appalling state of things after two thousand years. So the thing is self-evident. No, the ground of the presence and the power is this. If it was true in the case of the Lord Jesus, and undoubtedly it was, it was because He, in the other translation, made Himself of no reputation, and men are always making reputations for themselves in the sphere of God's interests, and God is not in it, will have nothing to do with it. You may do what you can and what you like, but you cannot count upon the presence and power of God.

The form — man-likeness

The form and the function — in man-likeness, in bond-slave function. I am not going to stop with the technical points of the different words here in the original, fashion and form, that will not be very edifying or helpful to you, and it does not matter just at the moment, but what it amounts to is this: the form in which Christ appeared here on this great mission was the form of a man. The function which He accepted, adopted and fulfilled, was the function of a bond-slave.

As a man, in man-likeness. All I am going to say about that here in keeping with this whole matter of the presence and power of God is this, that He did not appear here as some superior being

of another order. No. So far as the world looking on could tell, there was no difference between Him and other men, whatever difference there was, was altogether hidden from the world's eyes. They could look at Him, judge Him, speak to Him and of Him, handle Him, deal with Him just as they would deal with any other man, not as some superior being of another order. And you see there is a principle there of tremendous significance and importance where the Lord is concerned. We have said that the great tendency is to exalt men and make them of a superior kind. The tendency is to say they are great, wonderful, superior, above the ordinary kind of man in the work of God, and columns are written about the wonderful things that this man has done and achieved and is and all the rest of it. God looks on this poor thing with pity, if not with contempt.

In man-form, not angel form, not some superior order of creation, just man-form. We seek our embellishments to make an impression, we add things to convey to people that we are something different and other, to gain access and acceptance and so on. There is none of that in the mentality or the mindedness of the Lord Jesus. If we have not got spiritual influence, God save us from artificially trying to make it, to have it by artificial means, for it is men that God wants, not officials, not dignitaries, but men of His own making. That is enough for that.

The function — a slave

In slave function, the form of a bond-slave. "I am in the midst of you as he that serves" (Luke 22:27). "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matt. 20:28). What a challenge to so much in you and in me; what a challenge to so much there is in Christianity. "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." A bond-slave, not a dictator, not an autocrat, not a master — a servant, so it says here, and surely He was that. But this is the ground of the presence and the power, that is the point. It is always like that.

Obedience

And then the obedience. "Became obedient." I suppose before the incarnation He could command; angels would run swiftly at His behest. The slightest gesture or indication, and they would move to serve Him. But here He is the One Who is having to be told, ordered, coming under direction. "Obedient unto death." That little word 'unto' has a double meaning. It means right up to death, that is, right to the final step, the final phase, the final fragment of obedience; no more to be done, it implies the depth to which He went unto death, the death of the cross. How utter was this bond-slave functioning, how utter was this self-emptying! The cross here is set as the utterness of God's will, the fulness and finality of the will of God, right through to the last degree and down to the deepest depths. "Let this mind be in you."

"Wherefore ... the Name"

It is from that point that the turn is taken. "Wherefore ... God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name." "Wherefore" —what a lot hangs upon that word!

Well, these things constitute the ground of the presence and the power of God. "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. Go in this thy might." The strength of weakness, the strength of emptiness. What is the strength of all this that is no honour to man at all? "The Lord is with thee." That is all. What more do you want? What more could we have? If the Lord is with us, well, "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8:31). That is strength, power, assurance and certainty. It is alright if the Lord is with us, no matter how weak and empty we are, how little there is that we have to draw upon. It does not matter if we have no name, reputation, title or merits or anything else to display and proclaim. If the Lord is with us, that is enough. (...) That will be all the power that is necessary. Do you want to know the Lord's presence, do you want the power of God resting upon you? Well, it is the strength of weakness; the

wind, the water and the lightning all finding their way where there is weakness. The Lord give us this grace, this mind which was also in Christ Jesus, for we need Him and we need His power.

SIFTING UNTO VITAL SERVICE

Reading: Judges 7:1-7; 1 Chron. 28:9; Jer.17:9-10.

There are two main things being brought before us just now. One is the desire of the Lord, indeed, the purpose of the Lord, to have His people in such a condition and state that His glory is expressed and realised in them, His people really in the enjoyment of all that He has provided for them. He has provided life, but He has provided life more abundantly. He has provided spiritual riches and wealth, treasures untold and inexhaustible. He has provided spiritual food, a store which has no end, which can be drawn upon continually without failing. He has provided His own strength, that they should be a strong people indeed. The Lord has made a great and many-sided provision for His people, but history shows that His people have not always been in the enjoyment of His provision (...). Well, that is what the Lord wants. It is not an impossible thing, it is not just a bit of fancy and idealism, a high standard, a lofty conception but beyond possibility of attainment. Christ is a fountain of life, and many can say that they know something of the depth of the riches, of how wealthy it is possible to be in Christ, and they know something about the food matter, His wonderful inexhaustible provision of spiritual food, inexhaustible. (...) The wonder to us is the inexhaustibility of what is provided for us in the Lord Jesus. That is the one thing that is in view. I am quite sure that none of us are at the point where we feel we cannot know any more. That would be a contradiction to what I have said. None of us would say that we have really attained unto all that the Lord wishes and desires in these matters.

But it may be that there are those who are not in that enjoyment. They are just striving to make out a spiritual existence, as we say, to make ends meet, to find something upon which to subsist and keep going. They are living on very poor fare, and they are hungry, longing for more, and it may be that you do not feel that it is altogether helpful to be told about the things that there are for you. What you want to know is how you can get them, and how you can come into that enjoyment. Well, we are saying some things about that, but that is not our point.

The other main thing that is before us is that the Lord is shown to have moved from time to time during the history of His people when they have been in a poor state spiritually of weakness, starvation, poverty and defeat. He has moved to bring into relationship with Himself in a big way some instrument, sometimes an individual, sometimes a company, who have come into such a knowledge of Himself in this fuller way, in the greater fulness of Christ, that they could be instrumental in bringing more of the Lord's people into that good. The Lord must have instruments with which to do His work, and vessels through which to reveal Himself. He has moved like that, and He is seeking to have such an instrument in our time. (...) Would He not bring a people near to Himself and work in them (...) that, where they are, He might make people envious, looking on their food and coveting it, looking upon their wealth and longing for it. Yes, by expression, by example, by manifestation, to bring His people into a better position and a better condition.

God's Tests

Now I have a word which will be a very simple word indeed, but its simplicity does not mean that it is not very important. It springs out of the passages of Scripture at the beginning of this chapter, particularly as illustrated in that incident with Gideon, who was such an instrument laid hold of by God for the deliverance of God's people from their poor condition. It was the incident of securing a company, a band, by which the Lord could accomplish that deliv-

erance and secure unto His people their rights of inheritance in Himself. You remember, Gideon blew the trumpet, and there gathered unto him a great host, over thirty thousand men. Of course, even at that, it was a poor thing compared with the Midianites and all the rest. Nevertheless, it was thirty thousand. The Lord said to Gideon, "The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me" — terrible possibility — "saying, Mine own hand hath saved *me*." Well, the first test was, "Whosoever is fearful and trembling, let him return and depart." We have to admire these people, for one thing, if we cannot admire them for everything. They were at least honest, ready to admit that they were afraid of this business. Well, they had good reason to be afraid, and they honestly in fact said, 'We are glad of the opportunity of going home, thank you', and away they went. Ten thousand remained, and still the Lord had His basic difficulty, and He had to say to Gideon, 'There are still too many, bring them down to the water, and I will try them for thee there.' You know the rest of the story, just what happened. The ten thousand were brought down to the water, to the river, and then the Lord whispered in Gideon's ear, 'Do not let the people know.' That would have given the whole thing away, undercut the whole thing. He just quietly said to Gideon aside, 'Now then, tell them to have a drink; now you watch how they drink. Those that lap like a dog, you just set them on one side, and those that get down to it on their hands and knees and on their faces and wallow in it, you put them by themselves.' And so Gideon gave the order that the whole army could have a drink. They did, and their drinking, all unbeknown to themselves, was a test. The Lord said that it was a trying of them. "I will try them for thee." The word 'try' here is the word which means 'tested under an ordeal'. The same word is used in Psa. 66:10, "Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried", meaning an ordeal to discover something, to bring something to light, to bring something to the surface. "I will try them for thee there." This water scene is said to be a trying, and of course that gives some support to the interpretation that has been placed upon this.

It does not say so here, but the interpretation that has been given to this is that those who got down on their knees to drink were those who were thinking more of their own gratification than of the Lord's interests and the battle, those who just lapped it in their hands, took it and lapped standing, were those who were not thinking so much of that as they were of the real business on hand. I think that is a genuine interpretation. It certainly did indicate a disposition, and it is upon that that everything hangs, our disposition. They were all thirsty and in need of refreshment and renewal. There was nothing wrong at all in their drinking of the water, nothing wrong with the water and nothing wrong with their taking a drink of the water. The difference was this, that some regarded the water as a necessity, while the others, the majority, made it an indulgence. Some took it because it was absolutely necessary, but getting the necessity attended to, they were already erect and ready for the real business. The others were having a good time and giving themselves up to it, so to speak. They were more occupied with the thought of getting as much personal gratification out of this as they could, rather than being completely concerned about the Lord's interests, the great thing which was at stake at that time, the honour and glory of the Name of the Lord in His people.

That is the simple message, but it is a case of being sifted unto vital service, being tried with a set vocation in view. We shall never be of any use to the Lord beyond the point where we ourselves know the Lord. Real service is limited to the point of the experience of the servant. You cannot go beyond that; you cannot lead anyone beyond the point where you have gone yourself. You cannot give anybody anything beyond what you have got yourself that is of real food, real value. You can give a lot of teaching, but it does not get people anywhere (...).

A matter of disposition

Well, what are these three hundred like? The Lord has very simple ways and means of testing and proving, and they are often

so simple that we do not recognize them as testings and provings. This was a very simple thing for the whole ten thousand. 'Bring them down to the water and let them drink', and the last thing, it seems, that occurred to any of them was that, as they came down to the water and took their drink they were under a supreme test. The eye of God was upon them, and that was moving from them to Gideon, 'You see, you note that', and they did not realize what was happening. This great sifting and selectiveness for this purpose was going on in some very ordinary and simple matter out of their consciousness. You know, you and I would rise to an occasion if an angel of God came to us and said, 'Look here, you are called to a great piece of work for God, and I want you to give some proof that you are ready for it.' Ah, we would rise to it, would we not? We would be very, very careful, watching everything to see that we did not default, that we did not disappoint, that we were not set aside, ruled out. We would be right on our toes, as we say, about it, but the Lord does not do it like that. He has never done it with any of you like that, and He has never done it with me. But He has applied just as serious a test in very simple ways. I said that a gesture is a very indicative and significant thing. Here is the gesture. Here is one man who flops down at the riverside and has a good go in at the water. The other man stands by the river and takes up his hand and laps all alone. The Lord has not ordained that some lap and some go down on their knees and so you separate them. But it is a sign of the heart; it is a revelation of a disposition. This larger crowd, they are the people who want a good time even in the Lord's work. These others, they are not thinking of the good time at all. They are putting first things first. The first thing is this battle, this work of God. It comes first, and everything else takes the last place or the second place. This is the thing that is on hand.

We show our dispositions in all sorts of simple ways, just as simple as that. As we go about our daily life, our daily work, yes, the Lord's eye is upon us there in the office, in the workshop, in the shop, in the study, wherever we are. The Lord's eye is upon us, and our hearts are being revealed in just the way in which we go

to work in the ordinary things of life. We separate these things, the sacred and the secular: in the church it is one thing, in business it is another, but it is not. Our qualification is in our disposition, not in our consciousness of being under the eye of God, but when we are not conscious of that at all, and the disposition we are showing. That is the test. And oh, how many and how simple are the ways in which we show our disposition or our inclination.

(...) You have to show that you mean business, that this thing is a very serious thing with you. You will get as much as your heart is set upon and no more, and the Lord is looking at your heart. We read that David said to his son Solomon, "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts." We read those words of Jeremiah: "I, the Lord, search the mind, I try the heart." And what is true of your salvation is true of your usefulness to the Lord. None of us will ever be used of the Lord in any very vital way unless our hearts are wholly set upon the Lord and His interests and not on having a good time. That is, not to have every picnic that is going, not to have every diversion from the strain that is available, not to have every escape from responsibility and obligation that can be found, not a disposition like that at all. It means having the disposition that recognizes how great is the matter in which we are involved, and to be wholly committed to that, and not to allow our own gratification and satisfaction to affect or influence us at all. It is a heart wholly for the Lord.

The Lord has many ways of finding that out. I could not compass all the ways in which He does it, but what I want to say is this, that the Lord will present a test. It will not always be as to whether the thing is right or wrong, but it may more often be as to whether it is the good or the better. If you are of the disposition of the great majority, you will always be asking questions like this: 'Well, may I not? Is there any harm in it? What is wrong with that?' There was nothing wrong with drinking the water. It is not a case of whether it is wrong or whether you may, or whether you are obliged to. You see, that is a disposition. You will just only go so far as you must

if you are like that. What the Lord is looking for, and it is always a minority, is those people who never talk like that or think like that. May I? Must I? Is there any wrong in it? They are always saying, 'Can I do more than I am doing, can I go farther than I am going? Is there not some fuller thing that the Lord would have than I know, than I am in, than I am doing?' They always have a question like that in the heart: 'Has the Lord not got something more than what I have known and what I am in and what I am doing? Has the Lord not got something more? My heart is set upon all that the Lord wants, and I will never be satisfied with anything less, however good it is. There are many good things, but is there not something more than this?' Such are the people for whom the Lord is looking, and He who reads all hearts knows our disposition in this matter, whether we will accept something less, or never accept anything less than all that the Lord would have, if He could have it. The Lord allows opportunities to come for personal gratification. He presents something that demands hard work, and then He watches the disposition, ready to jump at that which offers some personal gratification, to grasp at an opportunity to shirk the hard work. If that is your disposition, it rules you out. He sometimes presents something in His Word or brings you up against something in His Word. Now then, what is your disposition? Must I really? Is that a command? And if I do not do it, shall I be breaking a command? Is that really necessary? And then we begin to go round to people who we think are authorities, or know better than we do, who know the Lord better than we do, and say, 'Do you think it necessary for me to do so-and-so? Do you think that I must?' And how often even Godly people have said, 'Oh no, I do not think it is necessary for you to do that.' We so often make men our authority in the things of God when God has presented us with something.

An illustration of what I mean is the following. I remember many years ago I was visiting a certain home. I felt constrained to go to that home at that time, that particular evening. I did not know why, but it just seemed that I had to go, and I was asking in my heart, 'Why is it I feel so strongly urged to go there tonight?' And

I went with this question. I got there, and while we were quietly talking together, I could not see anything special, then there was a knock on the door, and a man was brought in where I was and introduced to me, a man who had had a very remarkable conversion. He was in the army in the old days. He was soundly converted and had knelt down at his bedside in the barrack room with all the vile, blaspheming, drunken soldiers around him, and paid the price. He meant business with God, and he came into this home on this particular occasion and I got into conversation with him. It was the first time I had met him. I found him very earnest and as we talked I was all the time asking this question, 'What am I here for?' We talked on and on. Presently he said to me, 'What do you think about so-and-so?' It was a water test. Immediately he asked the question, I knew inside — 'That is the meaning of your being here and his being here tonight.' I said, 'Why do you ask me? Does it matter what I think about it? Has the Lord said that to you?' He said, 'Yes, I think He has.' 'I feel pretty sure He has, but I wanted some confirmation, and so I am asking you.' I said, 'Brother, if the Lord has said that to you, you just go and be obedient to the Lord. Everything depends upon your answering the Lord.' It was a real test, and we talked, and he went away. I went home. Some time later I was at that home, and the same man came along without any arrangement, and I noticed he was a little bit shy of me this time, a little bit awkward. When we got talking, he said, 'I remember our talk here last time. After I left, I went to such-and-such a minister of such-and-such a denomination whom I know — who did not believe in this particular thing, you see — and asked him what he thought about it.' The minister said, of course, 'No, that is not necessary at all.'

Well, we talked, and although I was not trying to press for this thing, I was taking the line of obedience to the Lord when He speaks, whatever it is. And the man came right back and he said, 'Yes, I see, I cannot get away from it, the Lord has brought me up against this.' I said, 'Alright, brother, you know your way.' He went away. It was some time, some months, before we met again,

and we did meet again, and this time there was a real arrest and death. We could not get anywhere at all. He was not coming on to that again. He was afraid, afraid even to mention it, because it disturbed him and we did not get any fellowship at all. But before he went, I said, 'Well, brother, are you going on with the Lord? Are you going to obey the Lord?' He said, 'I don't know, everybody I speak to says it is not necessary.' I said, 'If the Lord has spoken, it is a very serious thing for you', and we parted. One year later, in another part of London, I was walking along a road, and I saw a man coming towards me on a bicycle, and as he came near he recognized me. He wheeled round and went off for dear life in the opposite direction. That was the man. What did I hear of him? He had gone right away from the Lord back into the world, right back into his old sin, a drunkard and a blasphemer, right back to where he was before he came to the Lord. That is a true story. The Lord presented a simple test, and he said, 'Is it necessary?' rather than 'Oh, anything that the Lord wants, I am for that.' He did what the apostle Paul said he did not do. He conferred with flesh and blood instead of being obedient to the heavenly vision, and how much hangs upon it.

The Lord may present something, yes, it may not be this form or that form, it may be a water test. John the Baptist applied the water test at the Jordan. "Bring forth fruit worthy of repentance", he said, "and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father" (Matt. 3:8-9). Here is the test as to whether you mean business with God. And so it comes. I cannot tell you all the ways God has, such a variety of ways, but the point is this: God is always looking on the heart to see if we really do mean business. He knows the disposition, and He is seeking for a company of people who are not going to be influenced by anything at all, associations, connections, or anything else which would in any way stand between them and all that the Lord wants. Oh, it is a test that is a very thorough-going one, and how often people have come up face to face with an issue which the Lord might not have pressed right through. He does not always do that, but don't you make that a back-door way

out. Sometimes He brings us face to face with something, but He is not going to press that right through. He did it with Abraham. "Take now thy son ... and offer him" (Gen. 22:2). He pressed it right up to the last minute, the last instant, the split second of a raised knife and its falling, right up to then, and then He did not allow him to go through with it. He found his disposition. There was a young man who had great riches who came to the Lord Jesus professing that he wanted to know about eternal life. The Lord Jesus said, "Go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (Matt. 19:21). I am not sure that the Lord would have required the carrying out of that utterly, but He was testing his position. We do not know how much time or space there is between the two things, and actual demand and its fulfilment, but it is just in that narrow space where we come to the point, that split second, so to speak, where, if the Lord does not show otherwise, it is going through. The Lord wants to know whether we mean business with Him or not.

Now, you see, it is one simple, very direct thing, but look how much did hang upon this, on that three hundred. What a tremendous thing God did through them, how He committed Himself to them. What a wonderful thing, three hundred men against a multitude like locusts spread all over the land, and the whole lot of them thrown into confusion and divided and the people of God delivered. Three hundred men, but three hundred of a particular kind. The proof that they were of this kind was that they were prepared as three hundred to go on with the business. I mean, just think what it requires for three hundred men to look at a great multitude and say, 'We are not going home, we are going on with this business. We have started, and we are going through with it.' That was the kind they were. It proved that they were of that disposition, that just being three hundred up against tens of thousands, they did not shrink back, but they said, 'We are going on with this.' The Lord needs men and women like that, and only people of that kind and that disposition and that heart can serve Him in this great business of recovering His glory in the church.

THE CROSS, WHEREFORE THE NAME

We are now returning to the point from which we began in chapter one when we said that all that we were going to consider would be gathered into the cross and the Name of the Lord. We then did very briefly indicate that those two things are found together right through the Word of God. We instanced several of the occasions where they are found together. In the Old Testament, of course, the cross is represented by the altar, and there it is a matter of the union of the altar and the Name of the Lord, the Name of the Lord connected with the altar. In the New Testament the altar is changed for the cross, but the Name is still kept with it. I just return your thought to a couple of passages which indicate this very definitely and clearly. One we have already considered fairly fully. We are going to greatly abbreviate or shorten it for our purpose at this time. In Philippians 2 at the end of verse 8, we have the words "The cross", and then verse 9 goes on: "Wherefore ... the name which is above every name". "The cross. Wherefore ... the name". All the rest that is there is gathered into that. Turn back to the letter to the Ephesians and you have the same thing indicated. "He raised Him from the dead, and made him to sit ... above ... every name that is named" (1:20-21). "He raised Him ... above ... every name that is named." Of course, you will take account of the context of both of those passages, and you will find that it is all about what God has done through the cross of the Lord Jesus as the basis for glorifying His own Name or bringing His own glory into full manifestation. With that, then, as our basic position, the union between the cross and the Name, the Name and the cross, let us go on.

The book of the Acts, which is a very large and full book, stands entirely on the ground of the cross. That book is just the spontaneous issue of the cross. It would never have been written, and all that was there would never have happened, but for the cross. It rests upon the cross. And in that book of the Acts, the term or phrase "the Name" is mentioned no fewer than thirty-three times, which carries its own significance. The Name which is pre-eminent and predominant throughout that whole wonderful book called the book of the Acts rests upon the cross. And in the New Testament as a whole, everything is in the Name, the Name of the Lord Jesus. People are exhorted to believe in the Name. In answer to their enquiry as to what they should do, they are bidden to be baptised in the Name. Their gathering together as the Lord's people was gathering in the Name. All their prayer was in the Name. They were praying in the Name, they were preaching and teaching in the Name, and the work that they were doing, healing the sick and so on, was all in the Name. It was that that caused the trouble. The rulers came upon them and forbade them to speak or teach any more in this Name. All that — and it is a most inspiring, helpful and instructive study just to look at that in the New Testament — rests upon, and is inseparably connected with the cross.

The Name of the Lord Jesus came before Christianity. Christianity took its character in the first place from the Name. It was the Name that gave to Christianity its nature. I fear that it may have been reversed since. It seems, though perhaps not deliberately or consciously, that Christianity has come before the Name and gets in the way of the Name and is very largely a contradiction of the Name. What we have to understand and what has to be recovered if there is going to be anything like the power, effectiveness and fruitfulness that there was at the beginning, is all the Name signifies and implies. It is not just a title, a designation, some phrase, some tag put on — 'in the Name of Jesus'. It has become so commonplace to do that as a matter of practice, to use the phrase 'in the Name of Jesus', but nothing seems to happen and with all that so little results. It is not just the Name of someone, although that someone

may be the Lord Jesus Himself. It is something very much more than that.

It is impossible to consider this matter of the Lord's Name in the Old Testament without recognizing that it is not just a difference of title from other gods and other lords. It is an entirely different kind of Being, and there is more in it than that. And what is true in the Old Testament is true, infinitely and transcendently more true, in the New Testament. May I repeat that what we have to understand and what has to be recovered is the significance and implications of the Name as the apostles understood it, as the Holy Spirit caused it to mean, and therefore which resulted in such tremendous things. When they said, 'In the Name of Jesus Christ', something happened. When they prayed in the Name of Jesus Christ, something happened. When they preached in the Name, something happened. It is that something which is there, that we have to know and to recover. The Name and its glory has to come back into its right place.

Well, we have said, and we repeat, that the Name rests upon and issues from the cross, therefore *all the meaning of the cross is embodied in the Name*. That is simple enough, but it is very important, and to separate these two is to put asunder what God has put together, and when you do that, you destroy the real value. The Name can never be effective without the meaning of the cross behind it, or present with it. For the Name to manifest all its divine power and fulness, it must be kept vitally bound up with the cross. It must rest all the time upon that which has given it those values. 'Unto death —wherefore the Name'. You cannot divide those two.

So it becomes necessary for us to reconsider some of the great meanings of the cross which are gathered into the Name of the Lord Jesus and give that Name its real meaning and value. I am going to assume that we are the Lord's people, so that it becomes unnecessary for me to discuss those values of the cross which have made us the Lord's people, such as the atonement and justification by faith and the initial union with Christ by new birth. These are values of the cross, meanings of the cross, which are gathered into

the Name. Nothing more can be until that is true, so I am assuming that you know and understand that the Name of the Lord Jesus means for you your sins forgiven, your union with Christ, your justification before God, so that I can proceed beyond that to these further values and meanings of the cross which are gathered into the Name.

Satan's kingdom overthrown by the cross

Firstly, then, the cross was the place, the scene, and the occasion of the overthrow of a kingdom and its prince. Of course, we all believe in the common phrase 'the victory of Calvary', and we think we know a lot about that, but we have to be very sure about this, because it does not always seem to be working out. It was definitely and positively the occasion of the overthrow of a kingdom and its prince. That kingdom is a nature and a system in this world; ruled by Satan, a nature, and because a nature, a system. Every nature produces its own system. Every system is the product of a particular nature. When I use the word, I am only using another word for kingdom. In every different kingdom a certain nature predominates. In the kingdom of this world there is a nature, and that kingdom takes its strength and its form from that nature, and it is in that nature, through that system, that Satan rules, and the principle of that rule of Satan is the alienation of man from God. That sums up everything. All the works and ways of Satan have one object. His ways and his works are perhaps countless, so various that they are often difficult to track down, but howsoever many they be and however great their variety, they are all gathered into one single object, and that is to alienate men from God. That may be done by making a great deal of man, making him his own god, his own lord, the very deification of humanity, the enthronement of man upon the throne of his own glory.

Or it may be, on the other hand, to the other extreme, by depression and misery and suffering and degradation, and everything between those two extremes is just to make man on the one hand

independent of God, and on the other hand, bitter against God. The object is one: alienation from God, making man to part with God, to be independent of God, to take a course of self-will, to blind man, make him ignorant, everything to get in between man and the Lord. That is the nature that is in the kingdom of this world. For the most part, you can divide the whole world into those two sections. On the one hand, man made to feel that he does not need God, that he can get on quite well without God and be independent of God, and give God no thought, and that very largely along the line of many preoccupations and what he calls pleasures, the filling of his life so full that there is no place for God. Or, on the other hand, that attitude towards God of bitterness and rebellion and hatred. In greater or lesser degrees, the whole world is summed up in those two things, and it is in every natural heart. That is the kingdom of Satan, that is the kingdom of this world of which he is prince. We keep on the focal point, that which comes in between God and man and man and God as Satan's supreme objective and activity.

The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ meant the destruction of that. It was the occasion when the prince of this world was cast out, when that kingdom received its fatal blow, when that work of Satan was met, mastered and overcome. The Lord Jesus through His cross holds that victory in His hand. It has not yet become, of course, true in the world actually, but we are coming to this in a moment, the fact is there, that the Lord Jesus has done that, and believers into the Name of the Lord Jesus know it and are in the good of that. Therefore the Name embodies this, that that kingdom and that ruler have been cast out. The cross meant its destruction, and the Name is the Name of the One who specifically did that.

Satan's endeavour to come between the Father and Son

How did He do it? Firstly, there was none of that kingdom, that nature, in Him. Oh, how Satan worked along every line, by every means, to get in between the Son and the Father, between Christ and God. We have not the record of all the secret battles, but we

have enough to know that there was a battle going on throughout His life to get in between Him and the Father in some way. "If thou art the Son ... if thou art the Son ... if thou art the Son" (Matt. 4:1-11), trying to insinuate a question, a doubt, to open the way for a breach. I am not staying to take you through His life showing how here and there, in this way and in that, the enemy was at work by pressure and oppression, by subtlety, by foes, by friends, working all the time to find this gap where he could just thrust in his wedge, and then he would drive it home, and do with the last Adam what he did with the first. But, "the prince of this world cometh: and he has nothing in Me", He said (John 14:30). "The prince of this world" — note the phrase. Not 'the devil comes', not 'the great adversary'. "The prince of this world cometh: and he hath nothing in Me." He could not get in between Him and the Father. He could not bring about this alienation, this division and separation. He just could not do it. But for our Lord it was a matter of constant vigilance and conflict. It was not automatic. The mystery of His humanity, the humanity of God, God incarnate, is just that, that it had to fight our battle. It is a theological problem, I know, how a perfect being can be tempted. Leave it. But the fact is written large in the Word, that it was real. He was not just play-acting, it was real, it was battle unto blood, to maintain this to the last. It is no small thing when just immediately after His being raised from the dead, He said, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John 20:17). That is a tremendous victory over the dividing work and power of the enemy. He is still in union, in fellowship.

Ah, but what that meant, in the moment of His being forsaken by the Father, yet that is not the last word. No, that cry of forsakenness was not the last cry. The last cry was, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Father — the relationship through all is unbroken. He has triumphed in Himself. Yes, that is how He did it. All hell raged on that ground alone. Everything is focused on this man. Satan's kingdom is at stake in this one Man. All his hopes, all his age-long hopes and ambitions are in the balances of this one Man, and the pivot of all is this relationship with God,

and so hell raged from its depths against Him on this ground alone, this one ground of fellowship with God. It cost Him everything here in this world. 'Alright, if you are not coming into my kingdom, and yielding to my law, and falling down and worshipping me, and putting me in the place of God your Father, you shall have nothing, I will see to that.' And He had nothing, not so much as a place to lay His head.

He did much more than that right through to the end, and then from Satan's side and the instruments of Satan, He was murdered for it. Thank God, we know another side, but on that side He was literally murdered by Satan and Satan's angels. He was killed for that reason only, because of the battle that He had come to fight out to a victorious issue and conclusion, the battle of this relationship with God. But He triumphed, and He triumphed through death. There is God's miracle. The thing that was intended and calculated by that evil kingdom to be His destruction was its own destruction. The one who planned all that, thinking that it would be his supreme triumph, found it to be his supreme triumph in a way that was not meant. It was the undoing of that kingdom and its prince. That is the cross.

The power of the Name in the early church

Now you see, the book of the Acts which brings in the church, the book of the Acts and all that is there, and the church, stood on that ground. It took up the values of the cross. By the Holy Spirit, it was caused to stand upon that tremendous victory which Christ had wrought. By the very Holy Spirit the church at the beginning was brought into a marvellous union and fellowship with God. Oh, how strong it was. Now let hell rage against the church, as it raged against Him, and harass it to death and martyrdom. It cannot get in between them and their Lord. They have come into the good of His tremendous victory over that kingdom and its prince. The church stood on that ground, and, seeing that that was the content of the Name, we can now understand the potency of the Name in and

through the church in those days, that, standing on that ground, when they employed the Name, they implied the mighty victory that was gathered into that Name, what Christ had done on His cross, and things happened.

Satan's present work

But Satan has not given up. There is still the need for the church to stand on its rightful ground of the cross and the Name, and to be as vigilant as was its Lord, and to be continually girded because the world as a spirit, as a nature, as a spiritual system, is always time seeking some point at which it can insinuate itself to get between the church and the Lord, to make it necessary for the Lord to stand back, unable to go on with His people because that other thing has got some place in some way. This is the work that is going on. Yes, how subtle it all is. You go back with this thought over your Old Testament again, and you see it was not always by open assault that the enemy brought in the peoples of the world against the people of God to overpower them and to subject them to their deities, not always along the line of open suffering and affliction. Often it was a very subtle, quiet insinuation of something just working like that, almost secretly. People were hardly alive to what was happening, but then they woke up to find that they were in defeat. They had lost their Lord and lost their power and lost their position. And when the prophets — who were the seers, the men who saw, the men who knew the reason, seeing what the people did not see — when the prophets came to interpret their condition and their situation, they put their finger ever and always upon some secret thing which was of that other kingdom which had got in. This is a tremendous business for the people of God.

Why the loss of power, why the loss of the Lord's presence, why the loss of a situation such as obtained at the beginning in the days of the book of the Acts? Why are things so different? Why all the weakness, defeat, poverty and hunger among the Lord's people? Because there is that with which the Lord will not, cannot, ally

Himself. It has got in between Him and His people. You may call it the world, if you like. We speak about the world in the church and the worldliness of Christians. Well, what do we mean by that? It is not always the gross things. Sadly enough, there are the blatant worldlinesses, and in Christian assemblies and churches there is gross worldliness, but that is not all. So many methods employed, ways of going about things, so much of the energy and heat brought in is just of that other kingdom. It is not the Holy Spirit. Where does it come from? I sometimes think that Satan can energize to do what looks like the work of God. Satan is always far-seeing, and if he can get a false movement in the Name of the Lord, a false movement which is ostensibly a Christian movement, but which is false and is drawing upon other resources than the Holy Spirit of God. He sees quite clearly that the time will come when it will be far more difficult to touch things in that direction than it was before. The thing will have become so hardened as to be almost impregnable. You may speak about the Lord there. 'Oh no, we have had some, we have seen how that works out, it does not last, we are not going to have any more of that.' That is a state at last worse than the first. Well, if you do not understand me and agree with me, leave it, but there it is. There is a subtle working to get Satan's kingdom in the place of the kingdom of God, and Satan will do it by any means.

The church must be governed by the cross

The cross does represent the undoing of that kingdom, and therefore the church must be a cross-governed church. The cross must be its foundation and its basis, not in doctrine or theory alone. It may have all the doctrine, it may be most accurate and sound as to the atonement and as to the cross, the life, death, resurrection of the Lord Jesus, all that, and it may count for nothing spiritually in effect! We can be fundamentalists, and real spiritual life and power may be utterly absent. It is not that. It is that the cross is there as an actuality, a reality, undercutting the nature of Satan's kingdom. The church will know nothing of that first power unless it

is so, or, shall I say, will only know power in so far as it is so. That is the meaning of the Name. When we use the Name, we ought in our own hearts to be meaning the bringing in of all the potency of the cross of the Lord Jesus over against the kingdom of Satan in its nature and in its objective. You know quite well that, without understanding all this, without having had it explained and interpreted to you, when you really have come, as we put it, to the cross, that is, when you have received by faith the values of Christ's death and resurrection, you know that the very first thing that springs up in your consciousness is, 'Somehow, I cannot explain it, but I feel nearer to God, and God feels nearer to me.' That is the most elementary way of putting it, just the language of a little child. 'Somehow or other, God and I have been brought together.' There is fellowship with God, no longer enmity. There is a consciousness of union, no longer separation. Ah, but more, there is a consciousness of love and no longer bitterness or hatred or independence, and it comes to this, 'This is my life, and if ever I lose that, I lose everything. God has become in Christ everything.' That is the first consciousness.

Well, here you are, that is the work of the cross, that is the simple, elementary proof that the Lord Jesus in His cross went right for the heart of this whole thing, this separation between God and man. He went right there and fought that out, and so in Him risen we are brought to and joined with God. If that sounds too simple, too elementary for you, do not brush it aside. It is the most beautiful thing, but the most costly thing. Oh, what it cost our Lord just to fight out that battle, to overthrow that tremendous force and power to get in between God and man. He fought out our battle. Do you see, that is the meaning of the Name, that is the outworking of the Name. If that is true, if we are in the value of that, oh, how wonderful the Name, how powerful the Name! It is a great victory.

And do you not see that the object of the enemy all the way is to recover that ground? And he persists in trying, not now to keep us away from God, but to again get in between us and the Lord by any means whatsoever. It is a terrible thing for one who has really

known that fellowship with God to lose the consciousness of it. It is the terror of the cross again, the terror of that moment of forsaken-ness, casting its shadow over. It is almost as though it were being said, 'He did not win that victory.' It is as though all that Christ did has been nullified. Oh, what a thing it is, this fellowship with God, and therefore our whole New Testament is constructed for believers upon this one thing, the way of maintained and deepened union with God. It is only another way of putting the way of life in the Spirit. It is a battle. It calls for vigilance. Remember that the prince of this world in his own kingdom, to which, thank God, we do not belong, still assails us from without to try to get in between us and the Lord, and if that happens you know where it comes from. That does not come from the Lord. Beware what interpretation you put upon the shadows between you and the Lord. You know where they come from and you know the remedy. It is Christ and what He has done in His cross.

The motive for watchfulness

The issue is the dishonour of His Name. We come back to that every time. What is the motive for our vigilance, for our warring? What is the motive for our watchfulness? The only adequate motive for dealing with everything that comes between us and the Lord is the honour of His Name. In the fighting out of that battle in life and death, it was the Name of the Father. Oh, how much we have got to realize of what we know! In that marvellous prayer which is called His high-priestly prayer as He was just going to the cross, it is the Name and the Name involved in this company. He is praying, pouring Himself out in His concern for the Name. "I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me." "Keep them in thy name." The honour of the Father's Name is the passion of His soul, and He fought the battle of that honour right through at the cross, and you and I must be baptized into that same concern for the honour of His Name. As we go on, we shall see that in some very practical ways, but I feel that that is enough to challenge us and

occupy us now. Oh, that we should see one thing, that when we say, 'in the Name of the Lord Jesus' we are not just repeating some formal platitude, some habitual way of speaking as Christians. We really ought to be meaning, 'by the cross of the Lord Jesus and all it means'. You can put it that way if you like. This and that and the other 'by the cross of the Lord Jesus' the ground upon which God encamps, but that cross in all its values is embodied in the Name and the Name just means that, and it means nothing without that. The Lord give us to see and understand the meaning of the Name, and to be set upon the recovery of its values.

THE NAME ABOVE ALL

Reading: "The cross ... wherefore ... the name" (Phil. 2:8,9); "He raised Him from the dead ... and made him to sit ... far above ... every name that is named" (Eph. 1:20).

The absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit

The Name signified the establishment of heavenly authority vested in Christ, mediated to and through the church by the Holy Spirit. The book of the Acts is the book of the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, so absolute that nothing whatever was left to man to originate or enunciate. The Holy Spirit took the authority that had been vested in Christ in heaven and on earth according to Christ's own words. The Holy Spirit took that authority into His hands to mediate it to and through the church, and He was very jealous over that authority, over His prerogative and custodianship. Violate that sovereignty in those days, and you had to meet the authority of Jesus Christ, the supreme authority in heaven and in earth. Stand with the Holy Spirit in that authority and see what happens. You have got all heaven behind you and on your side. The supreme throne is at your back. I repeat, nothing was left to man then. The Holy Spirit jealously kept things in His hands, and let it be known that it was a very bad thing for anybody not to acknowledge that sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit was the absolute essential in that new order. It is not optional; it is not something of an extra to the Christian life later on. It is something right there at the beginning of the church's life. For all ministry and functioning and choice for service, the basic, indispensable

essential was that they were men full of the Holy Spirit, no less the deacons than the apostles.

In the Old Testament, when the Lord spoke about where He would meet men, and where men would find Him, He very particularly said that it would not be man's prerogative to decide that. He would not allow anybody, not even His own people and His own servants, to decide where He would meet with men, or where they would meet with Him. In the book of Deuteronomy we have this prescription for meeting with God very fully established. In that book in this very connection — 'Where I put My Name and where I meet with people' — is gathered into one word which is reiterated seventeen times in the course of two or three chapters, and that word is 'choose' — "The place that I shall choose, the place that I shall choose to put My Name there, to meet with you, the place that I shall choose" (Deut. 12). 'Where I choose', says the Lord.

And then on the other hand, He said, "Not in every place, but the place which I shall choose". That contains this New Testament principle, that the sovereignty is kept in the hands of the Lord, and it is only where and when we are under the government of the Spirit of God that we shall find the Lord there. The Spirit of the Lord brings the Name of the Lord, and if you are not where the Spirit of the Lord is, you are not in the Name and therefore you do not meet the Lord. You just cannot go anywhere you like and say you are going to meet the Lord. The thing is, Is the Lord there? Has He chosen to meet you there? Are you in the Spirit in being there?

Now you can see in the book of the Acts that the Holy Spirit was jealous on that matter. There were times when even the great apostles thought of moving in certain directions, and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not (Acts 16:7). If they had forced their way through there, they would have left the Lord behind, and we do not know what would have happened, anything could have happened, if the Lord did not go with them and they did not find the Lord there. And there are few more terrible things than that, to venture out and find that the Lord is not with you in your venture. It is a matter not only of place, but of time. The point is whether it is place or

time, whatever it is, the Holy Spirit is in charge of this matter, and He is the One who is to choose. It is the all-governing principle of the sovereign government of the Holy Spirit. It is God's choice, not ours, it is the Holy Spirit deciding, not us.

God's ground is Christ and Christ crucified. In other words, God's ground is the cross. So in the Old Testament here and there where God chose, they built an altar. It was the principle of the cross as the basis upon which God met with men. Well, the ground is Christ crucified in all the meaning of the cross.

That is the church where that is, and there is no church according to the New Testament anywhere else, on any other ground. That calls for a good deal of reconsideration and reconstruction.

Christ in heaven

The point is, Christ is in heaven. Right through this age, this dispensation, Christ is in heaven. We cannot make an earthly Christ. He has taken His place in heaven, and with its own significance He has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. I know in other connections He is seen standing there, but He is also sitting down at the right hand. In that sense, it means that He is not going to move from that. That is where He is, and for the whole dispensation until He comes again, He is there. We have to get off the ground of this earth. Not only has the world in its spiritual nature and system to be taken out of us, but we have to be taken out of it. We have to realize that the cross means that some tremendous thing has been done in us which has entirely cut us free from this world, its spirit, its system, and everything that belongs to it, religiously as well as otherwise. Something has happened. If you are going on with the Lord in the Spirit, because it is the Spirit who holds this reality, this truth, we are going to wake up to this, and we are going to realize this more and more, that something has happened, that we are not in that which is related to this earth, even in a religious way, even in a 'Christian' way. They took their stand, they came under the sovereign government of the Holy Spirit, but it would

seem for a little while that they were not fully alive to what had happened, but the thing worked in them until they realized that, whether it was a deliberate step or whether it was a secret working and operation in their hearts, why, they are out of this world and its system. It is something that belongs to another world, they are not in it. That is what happened, and the Holy Spirit pressed that. What it amounts to is this, that the cross is a super-earthly thing, and for the cross to come into effect in the life of a child of God or in the life of the church of God means that that life or that church is made a super-earthly thing. It is an elevation. The cross is elevated above the earth. It was literally, geographically, but that is significant spiritually. It is something that brings you out of this earth, this world, in a spiritual way. The cross means that, an extrication from a whole realm, and it makes us a super-earthly people.

Discord on earth, concord in heaven

Now I do want you to follow me very closely, because some of the things that are going to be said are of tremendous importance. If all of us have any concern for spiritual power and spiritual fulness, spiritual wealth and riches, spiritual food in abundance, spiritual life and spiritual power and spiritual victory, if you have any concern for these things, summing them all up in the phrase 'the fulness of Christ', you will follow closely to what I am going to say from this point. This earth is the place of strife and discord, and until the Lord Jesus brings to an end this present world order as a dispensational change and movement and establishes His own heavenly kingdom universally, this earth will never know peace. That may be a platitude, but let it be recognized that with every effort of man to get peace, failure is certain. It always has been like that. Wars to end war are not known in the history of this world. This earth is the place of strife and discord because that is the fruit of a curse. It is therefore under a curse and can never get out of it until that time of which Paul speaks in his letter to the Romans when the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of

corruption (Rom. 8:21). The cross severs from this earth. "In the world ye have tribulation ... in me ye ... have peace" (John 16:33). 'You are not of the world.' Touch this earth, and you touch discord. All discord and strife belong to the earth. The book of the Acts is a wonderful story, such a ceasing of strife among those there, such a wonderful harmony where there had been discord. You need not that I take you back to the Gospels, as they are called, to show you the discords between the very twelve themselves, and the strife that went on between them, the quarrelsomeness, the rivalries and the jealousies. Why, the Lord Jesus could hardly look in a certain direction without someone else being jealous in that little circle. But look now, the very first movement after the descent of the Spirit was Peter standing up with the eleven (Acts 1:14). No jealousies now, no discord now. They are all speaking the same thing, they are all thinking the same thing, they are all poised in the same direction. There is a wonderful fellowship.

And what was true of them then was true of the church. No one was thinking about himself or his own things, but all for the others. It is wonderful. Think of that in this world. Ah, but it was not in this world. It was out of this world while they were here. The cross had done it, and that is the value of the Name. You cannot use that phrase 'in the Name of Jesus' in reality, and then be at cross-purposes with other children of God. It is a contradiction. That is a denial of the Name. Discord and strife are outside of the Name, they are outside of the cross. And so what is the good of Christians going here or there, as they suppose in the Name of Jesus, to do a piece of work, and then being at cross-purposes among themselves. Nothing happens except that the devil laughs and takes away all the spoil. You see, an essential to effectiveness anywhere is this absolute victory of the cross over this earth in this sense that this earth is the place of strife and discord and never will be anything else until the Lord fills it with Himself. Heaven will be a wonderful time, whatever place it is. This world, this earth, can never know peace. War will continue and strife will go on, and these are the marks of this earth, but what are we to conclude when we see a

church riven, torn, at strife with itself. The church has come down to earth, that is all. It has come out of the place where the cross put it at the beginning. The enemy has scored a master-stroke in bringing what is called the church down into touch with this earth. You are not thinking that I am talking about the earth as a material, geographic thing. I am talking about this earth in a spiritual sense. We are here until the Lord takes us out physically, but we ought not to be here inside, in spirit. The earth can never know unity. From the day that the prince of this world gained an acknowledgment as such in the place of the Lord, from that day, from that hour, disunity entered into this whole creation. The creation, the earth, is shot through with disunity. Its cohesion, oneness and solidity has been destroyed, and that has gone on more and more, and we find the whole race as it is today as the result of God's reaction to man's acceptance of the prince of this world.

The church a heavenly body

What does this mean in practical ways? Well, I hope that what I have been saying is practical. It is a very practical test of how far the cross has done its work in us. But let us press this. This letter to the Ephesians, as the great and outstanding instance, has the church in view, and its view of the church is that it is a heavenly body. The church begins its career in the heavenlies. It is seated together with Christ in the heavenlies. It begins there spiritually, in its greatest reality; its history starts in heaven, and goes on in heaven, and this letter views the church as a heavenly body, a super-earthly body. The wonderful thing that comes in right at the beginning of this letter with that view of the church, is this. "Has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (1:3). Are you concerned with spiritual fulness? Does that phrase, "every spiritual blessing" make any appeal to you? Does your heart respond to that? Well, you see, the letter makes it perfectly clear that every spiritual blessing is for the church in the heavenlies, and if the church is not enjoying that fulness of every spiritual blessing,

wealth and riches and food and everything else, it must be that the church has come out of its place. It must be that it has come down to earth, for all spiritual blessings have been given to it in Christ in the heavenlies. Ephesians sees then fulness for the church when the church is in its right place, that is, in the heavenlies.

The cross the answer to wrong relationships

When you pass over to the Philippian letter, the same principle is applied to personal relationships in the church. Personal relationships in the church are in view here. Certain individuals have got across one another in the local church. They are out of harmony. What is the remedy? Jesus came from glory here and went back again and He is there in virtue of what He came to do, that is, His cross. The death of the cross, wherefore highly exalted, and the Name. The answer to personal difficulties is the cross, the cross mediated by the Holy Spirit from the exalted Lord. That deals with these things. In other words, whoever it may be, whether it be Euodia or Syntyche, as mentioned, or anybody else, the answer is — get off the earth. You have got down on to the earth. That is what is the explanation of this. Get off the earth, get up to where your Lord is, get up on higher ground. Allow the cross to do its work in you in this matter. That is the answer.

The cross the answer to the racial problem

Many different nations are here on the earth. But the cross of the Lord Jesus positively forbids us to live our life on that earthly basis of nationalities. There are no superior nations in heaven, and there are no inferior nations in heaven. All that is the result of a curse, and we are labouring hard under it. We are reminded of it, but we are not allowed by the cross of the Lord Jesus to be British and American and Indian and German and French and all the rest. It is forbidden. There is a notice up at the door of the heavenly church — *'No British Admitted, No Americans Admitted, All Earthly Nation-*

alities Excluded.' And yet how we allow our nationality, our race, our racial complex, to influence us towards others and towards one another. How we look at one another through our own national eyes and national standpoints, and judge accordingly. Oh, the havoc that has been wrought by that in this world! Oh, how the Name of the Lord Jesus has been dishonoured! How the power of His cross has been nullified by that sort of thing! Understand that the cross is meant to lift us all right clear of all that, everything that is earthly in what is national and racial. The devil has so utterly blinded in bringing down to the earth that what is called the church in South Africa can put up a colour bar and not allow certain of a certain race to enter its doors. This is the most violent and terrible contradiction of the cross of the Lord Jesus and the whole New Testament.

There is another solution to the racial problem, a divine solution. Thank God that solution was found in the book of the Acts. You will find different languages and different colours. They are meeting together under the Holy Spirit's government, and there were no superior people among them. No, all that was destroyed. I cannot speak too strongly about this, but I am leading to something else. The cross has dealt with that, and in Christ there is neither Jew, nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, or freeman (Col. 3:11). It is not that they are all in Christ and in Christ you find them like that, as that. They are not, they are in Christ. What is going to happen to you next time you meet someone of a race which you despise or of a race that puts your back up because it looks down on you? Are you going to take it on, meet it on its own ground, and answer it back and get equal and even with it, and show that you are as good as they are? Well, we will talk about that later. None of it, the cross forbids all that because it is the spirit of the world, the spirit of Satan's kingdom.

The cross the answer to the denominational problem

Is not the same principle that which operates between Christians and Christians? If it is true in nations, is it not true in denom-

inations? I am going to be very careful in what I say in this connection. The church is a heavenly body. These other things in some way touch the earth. Just as the national, so the denominational. Now, I am not denouncing denominations and — let this be very clear — I am not saying, and I never do say, that you have to leave your denomination, your mission, or whatever it is you are in. That must be the result of the Holy Spirit's sovereignty in your heart operating in relation to the honour of the Lord's Name. But I do say without any hesitation at all that you have to be above your denomination, you have to be super-denominational. If that is your world, your kingdom, your realm, you have touched the earth, and you have touched the divisive power of Satan in this earth. All that, in so far as we are a part of it spiritually, means loss of power, loss of authority, loss of spiritual fulness, loss of the significance of the Name of Jesus. The power of the Name, the fulness that is in the Name, the authority of the Name, requires that we are off this earth in spirit. It seems a very terrible thing that people are giving their lives to propagate and extend an earthly church. Sometimes men have said to me that they were going to a certain country in order to develop and expand the so-and-so church, giving a denominational name. What has Calvary done? Where is the Holy Spirit? Well, all that we can say is — no wonder things are so different from what they were at the beginning. No, the Name is above every name, in every realm, and that 'aboveness' is our place. Let no one go away and say, 'He said we have to leave our missions and our denominations.' I never did. But I am saying that if that is your world and you are finding that to be the realm of your ultimate interest, all I can say is that you will find it to be a very limited world spiritually. Until the Lord shows you otherwise, stay where you are, but ask the Lord to make real in you this thing that Calvary has done in lifting the church out of this earth contact in every respect. We are concerned with the recovery of the testimony of the Name of Jesus. We are concerned with the church's recovery to power and spiritual fulness, and this is what is demanded. It is demanded, and *there is no other way to it.*

I must stop, but here you see that this is the meaning of the cross, this is what the cross did, what Christ did by His cross. It is demonstrated, made perfectly clear for all to see, immediately after the cross when the Holy Spirit came to make the meaning of the cross real. It is seen that all this is true. It was only when the church later lost its life in the Spirit and began to become an earth-attached thing in different ways that all these wonderful workings of heavenly power and authority left it, the glory departed, and that is the reason. And that just leaves it to be said that if only the church will get on to its own right and proper ground in Christ in the Spirit in the heavenlies, it will know these things. It will not experience less persecution, perhaps more, but it will know power, it will know bread and food, it will know wealth and riches, it will know how to stand rather than flee before its enemies. The Lord write His word in your hearts.

TRANSFORMATION OF VALUES BY THE CROSS

Reading: "And it he (Gideon) divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put into the hands of all of them trumpets, and empty pitchers, with torches within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise; and, behold, when I come to the outermost part of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, For the Lord and for Gideon. So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outermost part of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch, when they had but newly set the watch; and they blew the trumpets, and brake in pieces the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands wherewith to blow; and they cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran; and they shouted and put them to flight. And they blew the three hundred trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, and against all the host; and the host fled as far as Beth-Shittah towards Zererah, as far as the border of Abelmeholah, by Tabbath" (Judges 7:16-22).

I would like to read in that connection the whole of the second chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians, but I will just take out the fragment around which everything else gathers — "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Let us keep before us that chapter to note its context as we go on.

What has engaged our attention in chapters 6 and 7 has been this matter of the cross and the Name of the Lord, and we have been seeking to show that the Name which was so mighty, so powerful, so effective, in the early days of the church, by which the church advanced, by which all its wonderful work was accomplished. The Name of Jesus represents and embodies all the values of His cross.

The transformation of values

Now we take this further fragment of that which is gathered into the Name, without which the using of the Name of Jesus has no meaning or value. It is quite empty and ineffective, but with this content of the cross it is still as powerful as ever. What I have to say to you is about the transformation of values which the cross brought about and embodied in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Until we, the people of God and the church of God, have really come into the meaning of this, and the meaning of this has come into us, until we really are grounded in it and it becomes a spiritual and living reality, the Name of Jesus may be used, but still it remains ineffective. It is as in the other matters already spoken of. This is imperative to the church for effectiveness. The church is called by His Name, but that can be an empty label and manner of speaking. It may be called the Christian church, which means the church of Christ. It may be called that, and it may be an altogether ineffective thing. We may be called individually Christians, or Christ ones, and yet that may amount to very little in real impact upon the world around us. We need to know what it means, and again I say the Name means all that the cross of our Lord Jesus meant. All the values of His cross are transferred to the Name, so that it is the cross and the Name.

Transformation by the cross

This matter, then, of the transformation of values, is of very great importance. It is all gathered into that little phrase of two words, 'Christ crucified'. You will see by what the apostle said in

this letter where those words occur, that he is placing that over a whole world and a whole system. He is putting that right up against another realm of things entirely which in itself was regarded as a very wonderful world, a very strong, wise world, a thing of which men boasted. The apostle simply puts right over against that, this 'Christ crucified' and this is infinitely and transcendently more than all that. This is a Name which is above every name, but it is the Name Christ crucified. He applies that to the sum total of this world's wisdom, that is the context, and it was a world which boasted of its wisdom, and indeed, in its realm, it had something to boast of. The wisdom of the Greeks is proverbial to this day. It was something, that wisdom of this world.

He places over against it the world's conception of power — and in their day they knew something about that, for the Grecian empire was in succession to empires of great power. And around the Grecian empire was this mighty empire of Rome, and in its realm it was power indeed, and we have the monuments of it today. You can go about finding a good deal of interest in looking up the remaining marks of the power of that great empire. Yes, in its realm and in its way, it was no small thing. Wisdom and power.

But the apostle says quite clearly that Christ crucified leaves it all far behind in the shade, makes it — and these are his words — nothing. As for wisdom, the wisdom which outwits all wisdom is found in Christ crucified. People talk about power and boast of power and have their ideas of power. Until we know Christ crucified, we really do not know what power is. Christ crucified is the wisdom of God and the power of God, and that has made the wisdom of this world foolishness, and the power of this world weak. Christ crucified, the cross producing a complete transformation of values.

Now we are going to bring that down to a very simple form of presentation. As we go back to the story which we have just read, the story of Gideon, and that particular part of the story which we lifted out of Gideon, his three hundred, and the way they caused a multitude like locusts for number, or another description of them is 'like the sands of the seashore for number', spread right over the

earth, how they caused that mighty mass simply to melt away from the earth as though they were nothing. It is true, it is not exaggeration, that is exactly what happened, there is the record.

The earthen vessels

How was it done? What was the wisdom of it, and what was the power of it? When we answer that, we have really got to the heart of the cross of Christ, and by that we have come to understand the supremacy of the Name of the Lord. It is very simple. First of all, there were the earthenware pitchers or vessels. The earthen vessels were a very important factor in this whole thing. They were only earthen vessels, nothing very beautiful, nothing very wonderful either to look at or in their constitution. They might have been golden vessels, brass or iron, and they would have been useless for this purpose. The chief advantage of these vessels was their breakableness. Their frailty was their strategy. They in themselves were nothing, and they were of no value whatsoever in this great ordeal and contest until they were broken. But look what came of fragile, broken vessels.

You know how much can be gathered into that. You know how that great Gideon, the apostle Paul, construed that, interpreted that.² "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves" (2 Cor. 4:7). This is Christ crucified. The statement is made, "He was crucified through weakness" (2 Cor. 13:4). But, oh, Christ crucified by the power of God. "The weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:25), says the apostle. The thing conveys its own message, but let us be perfectly clear about this, if we are thinking about power and great achievements, seeing the enemy overthrown, defeated, cast out, seeing the work of God go forward

2 The suggestion that Paul had the Gideon-story in mind when he used the metaphor of earthen vessels, is not self-evident. The reader has to bear in mind that the author supported allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament. See the editors' notes in '[About the Altar and the Name](#)' on The Golden Candlestick website.

with irresistible strength, if we are thinking like that, what do we think is necessary for that? — a wonderful organization, a wonderful lot of people with abilities and accomplishments and all that sort of thing? Alright, try it. God is not thinking in that way, for we come back to this: “God chose the weak things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are” (1 Cor. 1:27,28). Oh, that is a great comfort to all of us, and yet the deception of our own hearts is all the time contradicting that. We do not place a premium upon weakness. We do not regard this frailty as of any consequence with the Lord. But He does. Let it be understood that for His great achievements God must have, and will have, broken vessels. Be careful how you interpret brokenness, for, after all, it is the brokenness of our self-life. Some people have got ideas that certain kinds of weakness are the things that God is looking for, and He is not looking for that kind of weakness at all. It is the brokenness of the self-principle, the self-strength, all that can be gathered into that word ‘self’, or, if you like, into the simple pronoun ‘I’, all that that means. When that is broken, God can do something, and that explains a lot. That is the way of possibilities, the way of prospects and promise. Be sure God will take no other way to get to His greatest ends. There were the pitchers whose chief advantage and value was their frailty and their capacity for being broken.

The lamps

Then the lamps in the pitchers, and all we need say about that is this, that it is just there in the lamp that the power is. It is not in the pitcher; it is in the lamp within. It is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27); and the ground and occasion for glory. It is the lamp; it is the flame. Christ in you. There lies the power.

But again, He does not commit Himself to self-sufficiency. He has to be the only sufficiency. “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves”, says the apostle, “to account anything as from ourselves; but our

sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant" (2 Cor. 3:5,6). What is the sufficiency? Well, it is just Christ in you, the most glorious, wonderful and amazing thing. When you think of that in a vessel, you say, 'Well, that requires a very wonderful vessel.' It just does not. The cross transforms these values altogether and says just the opposite of what man says. 'For a wonderful treasure, you must have a wonderful casket.' And the cross says, 'No; for the greatest of all the treasures, an earthen vessel, fragile, breakable in itself, and in its own consciousness of its worthlessness.' It is an explanation, and it ought to be a very real comfort to us that if the Lord is at work breaking us and bringing us to the place where we are overwhelmed with the consciousness of our own worthlessness, that does make something possible where the Lord is concerned. That is His way of getting values. I am certain that in the end, the church, being a corporate vessel of that kind, will prove what I have just said, that we should be to the glory of His grace.

The trumpets

There are one or two things about the trumpets that we need to take careful note of. Of course, the significance of the trumpet is a testimony, a proclamation, something that can be given, and people can hear and know. This trumpet was undoubtedly the trumpet of testimony, and its note was with no uncertainty. It was a note of absolute certainty. Now that is a very simple thing to say, but you know the church is not blowing with one voice in absolute certainty. The church is very largely weakened, robbed of its effectiveness, because of its uncertainty, because its trumpet note is not clear and definite and final. "Thus saith the Lord." Oh, how the church needs that today! Oh, for a note of certainty! 'This is what the Lord is after, this is what the Lord is doing, this is the purpose of God, and there is no doubt about it.' If the church were to speak with that voice of assurance and certainty, what a strong church it would be, and how the enemy would be defeated. But it is not so, and this whole matter

of the certainty of testimony is sabotaged by all kinds of doubts, questions and confusion in the ranks of the Lord's people. One says one thing and another says another, and they are all contradicting one another, and they are all claiming to have the Scripture for what they say. Well, the Spirit of God does not contradict Himself. The New Testament makes it perfectly clear that the Holy Spirit speaks with one voice and one note; He is of one mind. If the Holy Spirit really is in charge, we shall all come to see alike on major things. I have no hesitation in saying that. If it is otherwise, somewhere the Holy Spirit has not got possession. Now it says here, "But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon and he blew the trumpet" (Judges 6:34). There was one clear decisive note struck by the Holy Spirit and there is power in that. The cross deals with that dividedness, with the weakness which comes from uncertainty. The cross of the Lord Jesus brings to us this absolute assurance both as to the Lord and as to His full and ultimate purpose. It undercuts all this other. The trumpet is the testimony borne with absolute assurance. It is sounded in strength. I cannot think of Gideon or any of these men putting the trumpet to their mouths and feebly making a little noise. We can only think that when they took the trumpet, it sounded with a tremendous blast that reverberated throughout the ranks of the Midianites. They knew that the trumpet had sounded. It was something effective. Calvary and the Holy Spirit through the cross makes not only for definiteness but for strength. For example, that wonderful scene on the day of Pentecost. If ever those men were uncertain before — if when Christ had been crucified they were saying, 'Well, we had trusted that it was he who should redeem Israel, and beside all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass. We do not know what to make of it, and we are all scattered and broken because we are so confused' — look at the transformation on the day of Pentecost. They are standing up, and there is no weakness about their testimony now. Calvary has done something, and the Holy Spirit has brought the good of that in, and they are people standing in the strength of Christ crucified.

Another thing about the trumpet here. Although there were

three hundred of them, they were as one. It was like one trumpet, one united sound, testimony, and the unity that was there was a very great factor. It was not one blowing, and then another blowing, and a little while afterwards someone else blowing, and a few minutes after that the next fellow will have a blow, and they are all over the place, blowing here and there. (That sounds funny, but we can sometimes get at the point in that way). No, there was a unity, a oneness about this, in time, in strength, in mind, in purpose. We can say that the trumpet was the expression of a unity that was in those men. We have seen earlier how those elements which would have made for weakness and disunity had been got rid of. A great company had been sent back because they were feeble, they were afraid, they were timid. Well, they would have taken from the unity. And a second company had been sent away, a large number, because their hearts were not really in this business. But you have sifted down to the three hundred. They are as one man, and when it comes to the sound of the trumpet, it is not the shout of three hundred men and the Lord. It is one man and the Lord. They are all gathered, so to speak, into one man, as one man, and the trumpet declares their unity. Ah, yes, there is mighty, divine strength in that. We have shown how the cross dealt with discord and disunity, the earth touch where there is confusion. The cross has dealt with that. In the church at the beginning we find that wonderful unity, oneness, born of the work of the cross by the Holy Spirit, and they went forward terrible as an army with banners. They were a small company.

Finally concerning the trumpets, there was the distinctiveness of their testimony. And that is an important factor, that it is possible for people to know really what you are after, what you are getting at, what you are talking about, what it is that is in view. It is distinct, no blurred, confused sound or note. There is a great need for distinctiveness of testimony in the church today.

The battle-cry

The next, the battle-cry. We have it here put in this way. They shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." But I find, I hope it does not dismay you, that that first part does not exist in the original text at all. "The sword" is not there. Oh, it comes presently. We will look at it by itself. But it does not come into the battle cry. Really the shout was not, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The shout was, "The Lord and Gideon." Perhaps you are wondering what the difference is, what is the particular value of that. Well, simply this. It was not the Lord alone on the one side. Oh, how much time and strength we spend in appealing to the Lord to do something. 'Lord, do something, Lord, do this', and we are expecting the Lord independently and just of Himself apart to do the thing. We are waiting for the Lord, when the Lord may be waiting for us, waiting for us to be in the position and condition that gives Him His occasion and ground for doing what He wants to do. The Lord does not act apart from His church. He requires His church, but His church must be in the position of which we were speaking in the previous chapter — on heavenly ground, not earthly. No, you will wait to the end for the Lord to do it without instrumentality. He will not do it. He has chosen that it shall be by men.

But, on the other hand, it is not Gideon alone. It is not "Gideon" that is the shout. It is not man; it is not the instrument. It is these together — the Lord and Gideon. Ah, but Gideon, a man so dealt with, that the Lord could commit Himself to him. It almost seems scandalous to link the name of Jehovah with Gideon, "Jehovah and Gideon". But the Lord is ready and willing to commit Himself to those who are like Gideon. We have seen the ground of Gideon's discipline, Gideon's sifting, Gideon's handling by the Lord until the Lord had subdued Gideon, won His victory in Gideon's soul, brought Gideon into subjection, to the place where he realized that, on the one hand, everything was impossible where he was concerned; on the other hand, all things are possible with God. It was a big battle in the soul of Gideon, but at last God won, subdued that man, and

the Lord committed Himself to that man. It is only the vessel and the treasure in another form, the Lord and Gideon.

The sword

Then we come to the sword, the sword in the one hand, "The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). The Word of God is a mighty thing. It was with the Word of God that our Lord Himself met the prince of this world. It was by means of that sword that the prince of this world left Him. The Lord said, "It is written ... It is written ... It is written ...". He stood there, refused to be moved from that. "It is written." We should be able to defend our position by the Word of God and stand unshakably upon it. Oh, how many things there are to bring about this strength in the Word of God, The Accuser is cast down by "the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11), and what is the word of their testimony? It is written, "There is therefore now no condemnation" (Rom. 8:1). No condemnation, it is written, to them that are in Christ Jesus. It is written — and the Accuser is defeated when you stand your ground on that. But the point is, having really and truly the Word of God for your position and standing to it, is like a sword to the enemy, but when that has been said, it has to be covered and qualified. It is the Word of God, the sword, in the hand of a spiritual person. It is the Word of God spiritually used. Scripture is taken for all sorts of positions, to argue for many contradictions to itself. It requires men like the men of Gideon to use the sword effectively; disciplined, broken, subdued, dependent people, spiritual men and spiritual women, and the spiritual value of the Word. There is no real potency in throwing Scripture about at the enemy. It is, what does this thing relate to, mean, from God's standpoint? What is the spiritual principle that is at the heart of this Scripture? What is the mind of God wrapped up in this word of His? To be able to rest back and grasp that, to know that this is not something from a book, though it be the Bible. This is something of real spiritual content and meaning. We have got to have it like that if there is to be this power.

And there has to be wisdom how to use the Word, and when to use it.

When we have said that we have covered the ground, but note, we must finish where we began. All this is the content of the cross. The vessel fragile and broken is that because of the work of the cross. The undercutting of all the self-sufficiency and self-strength is the work of the cross and be sure it must be the work of the cross. Just because you feel weak and no use, and therefore you can adopt a very pathetic kind of voice, that does not necessarily mean that you are weak, and that it is the work of the cross. It must be something that the Spirit of God has done in us, using the cross as His instrument. That is the kind of weakness that is strength. When it can be said I am weak like that, then it can be said, then am I strong (2 Cor. 12:10).

The lamps, the trumpets, the battle-cry, the sword, these all take their value from the cross, from Christ crucified. It is the meaning of the cross gathered up and passed into the Name, so that the Name embodies all that. The Name which is above every Name embodies that kind of weakness that is the power of God, that kind of brokenness that is the might of God. The Name is that. Ah rather, it is Christ crucified. As we have often said, it requires crucified men and women to bring the impact of an exalted Lord. It requires a crucified church to register the power of the Name that is the inclusive outcome of His cross. "Obedient unto death, the death of the cross. Wherefore ... the name which is above every name."

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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