the Golden Candlestick

THE DELIVERANCE OF SOULS

T. Austin-Sparks

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Reading:

John 4:14, 7:38-39, 14:17; Eph. 3:20-21; Col. 1:29; Rom. 8:11.

CHAPTER ONE

AN EXODUS ACCOMPLISHED

Reading: Luke 9:27-36; 2 Peter 1:16-18; John 18:33-37; Col. 1:13. "There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27).

"My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

"... who delivered us out of the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13).
"Behold, there talked with Him two men, who were Moses and Elijah; who appeared in glory, and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:30-31).

It is not fresh knowledge to you that that word translated "decease" in the Revised Version, is elsewhere translated 'departure' or 'death'. It is really the word 'exodus' — "spoke of His exodus which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem". So the cross is spoken of here as an exodus, which is simply a way or a going out, and the word itself, of course, immediately carries us back to a book which goes by that name and records the going out of the people of Israel from Egypt. What the exodus was to Israel, the cross was to the Lord Jesus and is for us — a way and a going out, but a going out through a definitely prescribed door, and that door is the door of death. That was the only way out for Israel, through the door of death. It was the only way out for the Lord Jesus, and it is the only way out for us.

But that can be put in another way. The door of death was and is the way out. The apostle, in the passage in Col. 1:13 completes it and says it is also the way in. "... who delivered us out of the

authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love". And in that connection, the presence of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration is particularly significant, for Moses and Elijah were two men in the Old Testament who knew, one, the way out and the other, the way in; the exodus and the translation, and they were there to speak with Him about this, that His death was the way out, but it was also the way in. It was an escape from one scene and condition and a translation into another.

But we must give due heed to another word here — "the exodus that He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem". Another word for that is 'achieve'. It was not just a going out — the door was opened and He went through; not at all. It was an achievement, an accomplishment, and, if we want some little idea of what that meant, look at the exodus of Israel again and see whether it was an accomplishment. Did they just walk out through a door that was opened? Not at all. There was an immense amount to be accomplished, achieved, to get them out through that door.

And the type is only a very faint shadow of what the cross of the Lord Jesus meant in the matter of something to be accomplished, a way out to be accomplished, achieved, a mighty work to be done. "Who delivered ..." — it is upon the meaning of that word that we are going to dwell. The deliverance of souls, "... who delivered us out of the authority of darkness". That is the one side, and we shall be looking at that in this chapter. The other side — "and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" — will await some further consideration.

Satan's rights destroyed

"Who delivered". What a tremendous amount there is in that word, what a history! We shall see that eighty years of the life of Moses were taken up by God with the formation of one who could deliver, for deliverance is such a tremendous thing. "Who delivered us out of the authority" — the word 'power' is in our version, but it is that optional word or that alternative word which means authority

or right, and here it has a double meaning. It refers to the person. You notice that it is translated in the plural in Eph. 6:12, "Our wrestling is ... against the principalities, against the powers ...". It is the same word, 'authorities'. These are personal things. They are entities in a certain position. The authority of darkness is firstly a person, of whom Pharaoh is but a faint type.

And then the authority is that power which is wielded and exercised by one in a position to exercise it, who has the right to exercise it in his own realm and whose very strength is in his right; from whom you cannot be delivered just in the direct way of snatching from his grasp, but you have to undo his right to hold, you have to take from him all ground of jurisdiction, to bring him to judgment and judge him clean out of court, so that he has not any more ground to stand upon, he has no case left. "Has delivered us from the very case that the devil has against us"; that is a tremendous thing, that he has no more case against us. And he will forever be seeking to have a case against us, to find some ground on which he can bring up a case against us. Hence he is called "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10), but he has had his case spoiled, his ground destroyed, his rights nullified, and in this way we are delivered out of the authority of darkness. The cross of the Lord Jesus is that kind of exodus, that escape, that way out, that glorious achievement.

This word 'authority' carries with it the idea of rights, and that great battle in Egypt, headed up to the Passover and consummated at the Red Sea, was all a question of rights. In the Passover, the rights of Pharaoh were wound up. If we understand the meaning of the virtue of the blood of the lamb, the dying of that lamb, the identification by faith of every believer with that lamb in death, and the appropriation by faith of the blood of the lamb, then we understand the meaning of Pharaoh's rights being wound up. From that moment, he had no rights over them, and they began their exodus. He sought to reassert his rights and he met the authority of superior rights and his hosts were destroyed in the Red Sea. He had no ground to stand upon, morally, spiritually or literally; his

ground was gone.

And all that is gathered into the cross of the Lord Jesus. The work of the Lord Jesus in His cross is all gathered into the Passover. Then, as He leads His people out through the offering of Himself, the shedding of His blood, Satan's rights over them have been destroyed and they have a position which means that, while Satan will be active afterwards, he is only active against himself while they maintain their position in faith. Satan is only bringing upon himself his own destruction while we hold to the ground that the blood of the Lord Jesus has provided. That mighty Passover can turn back upon Satan for his own undoing.

Deliverance from the authority of darkness

You notice that the book which goes by this name, Exodus, begins with the names of the sons of Israel, the names of the elect race, and then out of Egypt God calls His Son collectively as one son, the sons in the Son. He leads them out, and what a rich fulness of meaning that gives to a little statement with which we are so familiar in John's Gospel, "He calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out" (John 10:3). He leads out the chosen ones; He makes the exodus for His own sheep.

But it also has a reflection upon the state in which the true spiritual elect are found in the Gospel of John, and it says that those who were in Judaism, as it was in the days when our Lord was here on earth, were in something which was bound up with the kingdoms of this world from which they had to be delivered by the death of the Lord Jesus. It was a very religious thing. We are getting very near to the heart of things. Our deliverance from the authority of darkness may have to be wrought, not only in our separation from this world as we think of it. It may have to be wrought in a religious sense to get a people out into a heavenly place, even from so-called Christianity as a religion of this world, which is sometimes bound up with this world and its kingdom. This deliverance of the cross is an utter thing.

Complete separation from Satan's Kingdom

The Lord was very explicit about Israel's exodus. He wrought repeatedly for His own rights so completely that He would not compromise to the degree of a hoof. "There shall not a hoof be left behind" (Ex. 10:26). He was working for His rights over other rights, *His* authority, and He would not allow a fragment to remain outside of His own realm. That means that the Kingdom of the Son of His love is a Kingdom which claims all, which represents all, which means the most perfect separation from the kingdom, whatever its form and nature, over which Satan has rights and therefore power. God is not going to give His power, His glory, to any little fragment which lies within the domain of the prince of this world. The secret of spiritual power, life, fulness, effectiveness, the secret of reaching Gods full end, is found in the utterness of the dominion of the Lord Jesus, in His having His rights in the life. Until, in type, that was established in the case of Israel, they were a floundering people. They, although literally out from Egypt, were not out spiritually, and were weak, impersistent, unreliable, ineffective, inwardly divided. They were not really out in an inward way. God could not commit Himself to them until they were established on the other side of Jordan. Then He could; He commenced to commit Himself at Jericho and went on.

Israel was chosen, in the sovereignty of God, to be the instrument and vessel of blessing to all nations of the earth. God intended to reach all through Israel. In them, Abraham's seed, were all nations of the earth intended to be blessed. There is a sense, of course, in which that has been fulfilled, inasmuch as Jesus Christ of the seed of Abraham has been the blessing to all nations, but Israel as a nation was called to be a blessing and a channel of divine blessing to all peoples, and Israel failed. The church has come in according to the word of the Lord Jesus — "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). And Peter says about the church, "an elect race ... a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9), to take the place of Israel

with the same object, that the church might be the channel of divine blessing to all peoples.

What is the world saying about the church now? Is the world thanking God for the church, for its presence, for its influence, for its mediation of His grace, His blessing, His power? We cannot say it is in any very large way. Rather on all sides men say to us that they have no room for the church, there is nothing there that in any way speaks to them of the power or glory of God. And what is true of the church as a whole is true of a large number of the individual parts thereof, individual lives which are ineffective, powerless, unfruitful, uncertain, unreliable, and many other things which are true of individual believers. We are here to face that situation, to face it ourselves individually, to face it as representing the church. What is governing our consideration at this time is the deliverance of souls and that work is given to the church and is given to us. It is unto that that we are called in Christ, to be deliverers of souls.

Now, why is it that there is so much ineffectiveness, lack of power, defeat — that is, absence of victory; so much that does not count for God about us? Let us ask ourselves in all honesty whether it may not be that, as yet, we do not know in a living way the meaning of the cross as it is here set forth? The cross represents that accomplishment of an utter going out from a realm where Satan has rights and therefore has power to spoil. In Egypt Pharaoh had rights. He was king of Egypt; that was his domain, he had a right to do what he would. These people are in my domain; then they come under my rule and I can do as I like, as I will! So he oppressed, he weakened, he limited, he afflicted. And yet they are the elect sons of God, the called sons of God even when they are there. We are sons of God by calling. But what a terrible thing to think of sons of God in a state of defeat like this, all because they are in a realm where there are rights by which they are bound. While they stay in that realm, while there remains one hoof in that realm, the whole thing would have been under arrest. They might have all gone out, flocks and herds and everything of their possessions might have gone out, and then just one hoof of one bullock

left in Egypt. The Lord's attitude was, 'I want that last hoof before I move!' That is a very literal interpretation, but that is the Lord's attitude.

It means this, that our vocation cannot be fulfilled, the power of God cannot be realised while one fragment remains in the territory where Satan has rights. We must get onto the ground, into the realm, where all those rights are destroyed and he has no authority at all. And God has secured that realm, that position, by the cross of the Lord Jesus, and if you and I will only come into line with the meaning of the cross in its fulness, we have come into the way of power, fruitfulness, effectiveness.

I was asking the question, why it is that the church is so ineffective, which is only saying, why is it that so many Christians are so spiritually weak and unfruitful and ineffective. Somewhere there is a link with the world; outwardly or inwardly. That is, the kingdom of darkness, the authority of darkness. I am not talking about our being here on the earth and having to work here in this world. You know the difference between being in it and of it, between being here and having heart relationships, voluntary relationships, choices, interests, desires, ambitions and so on, to be a part of this world in its acceptance, its recognition, and many other things. The way out and the way in is the way of death; that is the exodus and the isodus. And that death, the Lord Jesus said, while it is all-inclusive in His own, for He has comprehended all that it means, it is for us a crisis and then a daily thing. "Take up his cross daily" (Luke 9:23), which means, I die daily to the call of this world, to the call of that kingdom where Satan has rights and authority, a call to my heart to be something here in this world as in itself. Oh, how subtly Satan uses that with many, seeking to argue that the realisation of an ambition would give even greater opportunity for the Lord. That is very nice to the flesh. Bring the cross to all those subtle arguments of the angel of light; and while I would not say to anybody, 'Be careless, slipshod, second-rate in what you are and what you are doing on this earth' — rather never let your Christianity make you less than the best among men and women and the most efficient in your job; at the same time, examine your motive, your object, your ambition. Examine your hearts in the light of the cross, and see whether it is self-gratification, self-glory, or any form of self as the goal that is influencing the argument. It is a deep heart matter, this matter of the cross *daily*, dying to much, perhaps, that the flesh would like, dying to the cravings of this natural life, and oh, they are so strong! It is so difficult to let this self go and be nothing among men.

When we come to think of the deliverer of souls, we will find Moses and Christ started in this world with no place of acceptance. Moses came into the world and found that the door was shut to him in this world and he had to be hidden for three months. His life was a prey from his birth. And Christ came into this world on exactly the same conditions. Herod's edict was at work and there was no place for Him, and it is very difficult to take up a life which is like that from the very inception. What you are as the Lord's, what you represent, you as a child of God, as a Christian man or woman, are not wanted. If you will only just compromise a bit you will be accepted. If only you will hide it a bit, nothing will be said, the way will be open for you. But if you are going to stand on that ground of Christ, then the door is shut to you; you are not wanted. This is what it means that the cross stands there right at the beginning of this life. You remember Exodus 12 — "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months ... they shall take to them every man a lamb." The beginning was with death, death to self, as to this kingdom.

We know that this is very practical in its application, and it does work out like this, that, inasmuch as there is anything that belongs to that realm in ourselves, inasmuch as it is here and we are actuated by it, influenced by it, governed in any way by it, spiritual weakness, defeat, paralysis and unfruitfulness are the outcome. Somewhere there is a link, a connection with the realm the Lord cannot have, His rights are not ceded. We have to come out of the *authority*, not only the realm, but the *right* of Satan, into the Kingdom of the Son of His love.

You notice the Mount of Transfiguration. "There are some of

them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27). Then eight days afterwards — a significant number — resurrection, new ground, the old world gone, the Son of Man is glorified. He takes Peter and John up into the mountain, a heavenly position, and prayed. There came a voice out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son; hear ye Him." Peter, recounting it in his letter, says, "He received from the Father honour and glory, and there was borne such a voice to Him by the Majestic glory. This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:17-18). "Into the kingdom of the Son of His love". "In whom I am well pleased". That very Kingdom of the Lord's pleasure, the Lord's delight, lies on the other side of the exodus.

That is only saying that the place of the Lord's favour, blessing, delight and committal of Himself is on the other side of the door, that exodus out of the authority of darkness. In that realm of Satan's rights, there is no good pleasure of the Lord. In the realm of Christ crucified, and risen, the realm into which we are translated, there is the good pleasure of the Lord, the delight of the Lord.

The Lord saying to us, Where are your hearts and how much are your hearts there? Do we have any heart reservation, a hoof in Egypt? How tragic is this day, how desperate is this day, how terrible is the situation in this world today because of the church's loss of power, what a cry there is today for the Lord to have in this world a vessel of spiritual power and effectiveness among men to set off all that the devil is doing, to answer all the arguments. Oh, there is a need! Do we despair? What is our attitude toward it? Are we just giving up or are we really believing that the Lord wants such an instrument yet, His heart is still set upon a people like that, He is after them and we are in His thought. You and I are individually, in the thought of God to be part of something even in a day like that and perhaps in these end days, to be His answer to the devil's gloat that the church has lost out, the people of God count for nothing; His answer to the world's right to say that the church, as it views

'the church', counts for nothing. The Lord, then would get us into a place where, through us, He can meet His need and bring up again an effective witness. He may, as He often has done, begin with a small thing, but that is the basis. The cross is being thought of so much traditionally; it is His crucifixion that is in mind with so many. That is not it. It is His exodus, the way out, and we have no right to talk about the cross of the Lord Jesus, claim to know anything about it, until we are out by it, until it has meant that we are delivered from the authority of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His love.

May the Lord get what He is after and find all of us a people unreservedly and undividedly on that side.

THE NEED FOR A TRUE APPREHENSION OF THE CROSS

Reading: Matt. 16:21-23, 28; 17:1-5; Luke 9:27-31,35; John 18:36; 12:31; 14:30; Col. 1:13.

In our previous meditation we were mainly occupied with that statement concerning Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration speaking with the Lord Jesus concerning His exodus which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. We saw that, what the Exodus was to Israel in the Old Testament, the cross of Christ was to Him and is to us. It was not just a going out, but a going out fraught with terrific conflict and cost, something which had to be accomplished or achieved, and that accomplishment lay in the direction of the authority of darkness; not merely the realm of darkness, but the right, the jurisdiction, the authority of darkness, and in that realm the prince of that realm had rights. And the strength which he wielded was by reason of his rights and his rights had to be entirely destroyed so that he no longer had any lawful claim. When his rights were destroyed and the superior rights of the Lord were established, any movement of the enemy was to his own undoing, as at the Red Sea.

The thing with which we are occupied at this time is the deliverance of souls. "Who delivered us out of the authority of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13), and in that connection, the Mount of Transfiguration as a place of very great significance.

The cross the answer to the natural man

You will notice from what we have just read, that it follows very closely upon Peter's protest against the intimation of the cross: "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed ... And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from You, Lord: this shall never be unto You." This drew out from the Master the declaration that that was satanic in its origin and nature, from this world, as men of this world view the cross, and as Satan would hinder the cross, and the Lord Jesus saw right through, right into that, and was immediately aware that this attempt to keep Him from going to the cross and this appeal along sympathetic, sentimental lines was, so far as Peter was concerned, an entirely false conception of the cross, but, so far as the devil was concerned, an attempt to frustrate his own undoing.

The cross, therefore, as brought into view on the Mount of Transfiguration, was so brought in at that time in connection with Peter's protest and the devil's attempt, in order to give the cross its right meaning and value. Peter was, in effect, saying, We can never entertain the idea of a tragic end of everything, coming to such an appalling issue. If this happens, why, everything is lost, everybody will say that you are a failure, that you have hopelessly broken down in what you undertook. They will have a right so to judge of the value of your life and teaching, that it all finished in a tragic death. That is this world and its interpretation of things; that is how the natural man views things. "My kingdom is not of this world", very different from that. So we can see that the Mount of Transfiguration was brought in on that side to correct a false conception of the cross. "He was crucified through weakness" (2 Cor. 13:4), He was delivered into the hands of His enemies. From all worldly, natural standpoints that cross did represent failure. Looked at as a spectacle, it was one of tragedy and shame. Viewed from the point of view of the ambitions of this world, the ideas of this world

concerning glory and success, it is a miserable and horrible collapse of everything. It is hopelessness, it is despair; in a word, it is failure.

Now, Peter with the others saw Moses and Elijah and heard them and what they were talking about, and what they heard was that they were speaking about something that was going to be achieved, not something that was going to happen to Him, not some disaster that was going to overtake Him; but an accomplishment. And they heard a word used that, for Moses and Elijah, must have held a tremendous content — his exodus, and Peter ought to have known something of the meaning of that. Well, as we said in our previous meditation, the usage of that word at that time, under those circumstances, brought in that tremendous thing which always stands, so far as the Old Testament dispensation is concerned, as the greatest thing in history. Whenever the Lord wanted to refer to a great thing or the greatest thing that man had known, He always said, "I am the Lord which brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." He always reminded them of that. It was the greatest thing in human history, it was an achievement of superlative meaning and power, and that gives the cross a new meaning. It is not defeat, it is not failure, it is not weakness. It is a tremendous accomplishment.

What I understand by the Mount of Transfiguration, among other things, is that that is why it came in at that point. Peter said, "Be it far from You, Lord: this shall never be unto You." Now, Peter, you need, as one who is going to be in this great business of the delivering of souls, to have your conceptions of the cross entirely turned inside out and upside down, changed and revolutionized and put round the opposite way.

The deliverance of souls necessitates, therefore, a right and proper apprehension of the cross as to its tremendous achievement, what it has done, what it means. We shall never be in the way of the deliverance of souls unless we have a correct and sufficient apprehension of the meaning of the cross, that it does represent a mighty accomplishment, and the accomplishment is in the providing of the way out for souls as the setting aside of all that

which is in the way of their emancipation.

Now, go back to Egypt and see how much had to be set aside, how again and again the Lord came back to meet the thing that rose up. Ten times things rose up to frustrate that emancipation. Again and again Pharaoh presented a new obstacle, and the Lord rose up and met it and answered it and swept it out of the way in judgment until the whole was gathered up in the last final, inclusive assault. He met the whole power of death which held that people in bondage, and answered it and, in answering it, answered everything that meant their bondage. The Lord came in all the way through to meet the many-sided hindrances and obstructions to the going out of this people into liberty. He answered it, He met it; He made the way out like that, He cleared the way like that, so that, at the end, there was not a thing that could stand in His way. The record is that not a finger was lifted; there was nothing that could stand any longer in His way.

Do we really believe that the cross of the Lord Jesus has met every aspect of satanic opposition to the deliverance of souls; that in the cross of Christ there is a sufficient answer to every phase of a soul's difficulty in getting free? In the cross is the answer to every obstruction to the church's final and full emancipation. He has accomplished an exodus.

And we know that it was not for Himself. Someone has said that it was but a short space from the Mount of Transfiguration into heaven and He could have passed right on in His own right, but He turned and came down again to Jerusalem and to Calvary because the exodus was for us and not for Himself alone. He could not be perfected alone; He, without us, could not go through. The way was for the church and the way is completely accomplished in His cross.

And it was accomplished; it is not being accomplished, He is not fighting the battle of our emancipation now. He has fought it and concluded it. All the battle lies in the realm of our apprehension, our faith. If we can but believe and stand firm upon that ground of His accomplishment, there is nothing to stand in the way at all. Our slowness of progress in going out and going free and going on

is all to do with our faith and our faith in what has been done. That is one side. It is the setting of the cross in its right place, the giving to the cross its right value, its right meaning. It is the answer to the natural man's view of the cross. It gives it the place of tremendous glory and power and triumph rather than of failure.

The cross the answer to Satan

But then there is the other aspect, the deeper one — the answer to Satan. Through Peter, Satan came in to seek to lay an arresting hand upon Him to stop Him going up to Jerusalem, to turn Him aside, to make an appeal to Him not to go on with this. We have intimated why. We read that, as He came in view of the cross, He said, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself" (John 12:31-32). So not going to the cross, the prince of this world would not be cast out, and all men would still remain in the power of the prince of the world. That power had to be broken, that authority had to be undone and all men had to be free to move out from Satan's domain. The cross was the way out, the cross was the undoing of Satan and the complete undercutting of his authority. That was the meaning of the Mount of Transfiguration — only in part, but it meant that. The answer to the world in the heart of man; the answer to Satan in the heart of the world.

A Kingdom not of this world

And that is the meaning of the Lord's word to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." It is an altogether different Kingdom. Oh, what a lot that statement means if we understand it rightly. See what it means where Pilate and his world was concerned. The kingdom of the world is Pilate's kingdom. It is position, prestige, power, name, possessions, here; the kingdom of this world. That is Pilate's world — temporal, sentient. The word of the Lord will set that whole idea of the kingdom on one side and be a terrific

challenge to us in many ways. If we have our hearts in any way set upon a kingdom here in this world, there is no hope in those words for that. What it will set aside for Herod's world, that is, the Jewish world! — for even the Jews with their passion and, as it has been called, their genius for religion, are bound hand and foot in their religion by this world, and their final statement about the effect that the Lord Jesus would have if He was allowed to go on was, "The Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation" (John 11:48). 'Our kingdom' that meant, something worldly, even though in a religious way.

This statement of the Lord Jesus, "My kingdom is not of this world", will sweep away entirely all that represents a religious kingdom here on this earth, in this world. It will plough its way right down into the very depths of our being and challenge us and test us on all our motives, expectations and hopes. It covers so much ground, and so many things. This word, "My kingdom is not of this world" wipes that clean out.

Look at the cross; what have you to write about from the natural standpoint? What can you say about it? "Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled" (Matt. 26:56, KJV). What are you going to write about that? No, the natural man would not get down to that spectacle. Look at Jesus alone on the cross, all His closest and nearest having left Him, afar off, and all those crowds which once followed Him now scattered, afraid, even His disciples, to be known to have had any association with Him at all. The natural man does not describe that as a tremendous success, a mighty accomplishment. There never was anything so vital in the history of this universe; the natural man does not say that, but that is the test.

"My kingdom is not of this world." It is a Kingdom and it is a mighty Kingdom, and a mightier Kingdom than any that this world has known, mightier than all the kingdoms of this world combined. That is a test for my heart and yours. Not until we get through there on to that ground do we have power over the enemy. Satan had power over Peter until Peter had got through on that matter. Satan and Peter were really of one mind, working together though poor

Peter never intended it or wanted it to be so. Nevertheless, here it is. The Lord turned and said unto Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan." There is something of a league between the mentality of Peter and Satan, until Peter has got through over this whole matter as to what he is after, whether it is something here in this world or whether it is the Kingdom which is not of this world. Peter could never be the deliverer of souls which he was called to be until that was settled.

Peter refers to this matter in his second letter. He brings up this matter of the Mount of Transfiguration; he says, "We did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16), and he goes on to describe what they saw. He has prefaced this by saying, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables." In other words he is saying, "Our feet are upon solid and true ground, not false ground, not fabulous ground; we are not in a false position, we are on true ground, not fables. And the true ground was this: "We saw and we heard when we were with Him in the holy Mount." Now, what is Peter doing in those letters and in his whole life and ministry? He is seeking the deliverance of souls, the emancipation of the church. He is working in relation to a commission — "When once you have turned again, establish your brethren" (Luke 22:32). "Do you love Me?" "Feed My lambs, tend My sheep" (John 21:15-17). How can he carry out his commission? Only by being upon absolutely solid and true ground, not fables, not reports, not mere teachings and doctrines but upon, "We saw, we heard", no weakness in our position.

What are we driving at? The Lord is seeking the emancipation of a people from this present evil world, from the authority of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, into the Kingdom which is not of this world, the Kingdom which is a Kingdom of spiritual power and not worldly glory. He is seeking that, and anyone who has to do with that has got to be upon this solid ground — we know, we have seen, we have heard, the thing has taken place in our history, it is not fables. Only so can the work be done. We shall find, when it comes really to delivering souls or getting our own

souls delivered, that we want something more than fables, teachings, truths as such. We need to have solid ground under our feet, we are able to say, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables ... we were eye-witnesses", or, as John would put it, "that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled"; something that has come right into our experience.

For Peter, what he saw was the correcting of his idea of the cross and the undoing of all satanic ground in him. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). Why did the Lord know that, how did He know that? It was the result of a perception which puts two things together or always sees the result of certain things. If we nave a natural mind about divine things, if we are interpreting divine heavenly things according to the natural mind, the natural soul, according to this world, Satan gets his way and he is going to give us an awful undoing. The Lord Jesus said, "I have prayed for you", and it would have gone ill with Peter if the Lord had not prayed for him, because Satan had his ground in Peter in that natural standard of judgment.

Now Peter saw in the Mount of Transfiguration that which changed his ground, his entire mentality, about the cross, and put him in a place of power to deliver souls. He had come that way and been delivered by the cross and now he could be in turn a deliverer by reason of what had happened in himself.

I think we see what the challenge is. I have a strong feeling that the Lord is after something in some of our lives. The Lord is after getting certain lives out of the realm of the paralysis and weakness and defeat which is consequent upon some internal compromise. Satan is having ground because of indefiniteness, lack of thoroughness and utterness, and the enemy is just wasting those lives, and the Lord is not getting what His heart is set upon in those lives. It is because they are not set upon the Lord wholly, where His interests so govern that on all matters they seek His mind and are not at all swayed by what they would like, choose, prefer, the way they would go, but the Lord's way, however much it goes against their

own natural desires. The Lord's burden is to get people utter in this way, so that the prince of this world has no power in our lives, that he is cast out, has no ground, the Lord gets all — and the cross means that. It is the way out and it is right out of that authority of darkness, the hand which holds because it has got something to hold. Oh, thank God, the Lord Jesus has done the thing for us that has taken from the enemy all that he can hold if only we will stand on the ground of an utter burnt offering. There is nothing that the enemy can do when the Lord has got us there.

CHAPTER THREE

FACTORS IN DELIVERANCE

Reading: Luke 9:27-36; 2 Pet. 1:16-19.

We have been seeing something of the meaning of the cross as it is referred to in this account of the Transfiguration, referred to by Moses and Elijah as the Lord's exodus which He was to accomplish. The word 'exodus' links the cross of the Lord Jesus with the great deliverance of Israel from the land of bondage, His cross being that to which Paul refers when he says in language which reminds us so much of the great Old Testament exodus — "who delivered us out of the authority of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13); so that the matter with which the Lord is engaging us at this time is the deliverance of His people or the deliverance of souls. The Lord may lead us at some time to a consideration of their deliverer, that is, the servant of the Lord as a deliverer of souls.

I think it would be well if we sought to state in a very brief way in a sentence or two what it really is that the Lord is doing is seeking to do, in the light of this word, "His exodus which He was to accomplish", and what it includes in the Old Testament type. The answer to such an enquiry as to what the Lord is really seeking to do in this dispensation is this, that He is seeking the deliverance of an elect people from this world for Himself to bring them into the fulness of Christ. That is comprehensive, it is very concise. I think it hardly necessary to stay to define the words, the terms, or to struggle with problems which some of the words may seem to represent such a word as 'elect'; but it will be a real help if we can

get quite clear and settled about that matter.

Not one of us believes or imagines that God is seeking to save the whole world in this dispensation, that that is His goal. That does not mean that He is not seeking to have the Gospel preached to the whole world which is guite another thing. But the salvation of all men in this dispensation is not set as God's goal. It is the taking out of the nations of a people for His Name. What we have revealed is that God has, from before times eternal, foreseen a people which He will take out for Himself and bring into a special position in relation to Himself for a special vocation in relation to all others, and that special people is the elect, not in the matter of salvation, but in the matter of vocation. So there we begin. God has a people known to Himself whom He is seeking to possess for Himself, and that people has to be delivered, emancipated, from an authority called 'the authority of darkness'. We have seen in our previous meditations what that means. And God's object is to bring that people into the fulness of His Son, Jesus Christ, and that means more than just appears on the surface. That means that it will be a people which is God's object and who will come into that fulness; that is, it cannot be just individuals. Though the people will be made up of individuals and may be gathered in an individual way, nevertheless, God's thought is not ending with individuals; it is a people.

That means that no individual as an individual can ever know the fulness of Christ. It will take a people to know that fulness, and that means that there must be relatedness unto fullness. To put that round the other way, it means that anything that only has to do with individuals and ends with individuals, either in salvation or spiritual life or in service, can never reach the fulness of Christ. It must at some point come to a standstill, for it requires every member to make a body and every member in relationship with the other and all the members in right relationship. The Body is God's object. That is what God is after. Call that people what you like. Peter speaks of that people as "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Pet. 2:9). Paul calls it "the church, which is His body" (Eph. 1:22-23). Someone

else, or perhaps Paul, calls it the house of God — "whose house are we" (Heb. 3:6); different designations each carrying its own significance, but meaning the same thing. We will leave designations and just keep in view the implications. It is a people to be delivered from this present evil world, from the authority of darkness, for God's own possession, to come to the fulness of Christ.

Now we come back to this Mount of Transfiguration, and we shall find here the features which are basic to this very purpose of God. It stands to reason that if the cross of the Lord Jesus is really the exodus which He accomplished and that is the counterpart or the antitype of the exodus of Israel from Egypt, then the object in view must be the same. In the case of the exodus from Egypt, it was a people being delivered from the authority of darkness through the slain lamb, the shed and sprinkled blood, brought out to God to be God's own peculiar people and possession with a view to bringing them into the land of fulness featuring Christ. That is the old exodus type.

Calvary is the new supreme antitype exodus, and it is not only a way accomplished and worked out. It is, as the old was, for a people to be brought out to God with a view to the fulness of Christ.

Seeing the Son of Man glorified

Look at this account of the Transfiguration of the Lord which just gathers round this central thing, the exodus which He was to accomplish. The very first thing here is the Son of Man glorified and seen as glorified; and that is the first great factor in the emancipation of any people, seeing in spiritual illumination by the Holy Spirit, the Son of Man glorified; what that means coming to the heart.

The term 'Son of Man' links Him at once with a people, a race, a new creation, of which He is the Firstborn, and that word 'Firstborn' does not only mean that He comes as the first one. It means that He is the archetype, He is the representative of all who will follow; the Son of Man, the great link with a race bringing Him into identification with man, and He, the Son of Man, is said here to

have been glorified. So that the beginning and the end are brought together in this Mount in a remarkable way. The Son of Man, the first of this new race, this new people, is there as representative of this company which God is bringing out and going to bring out; and then the end of that company is brought into view right at the beginning with the Firstborn glorified, showing what God has in view for this people. "Glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:17), sharing that glory, conformed to His glorious body.

You notice that Peter, under the hand of the Holy Spirit, uses very extraordinary words when he speaks about this. He says, "... when we made known unto you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ ... in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1:16-18). That word 'presence' is the word which is always used in the New Testament of the second coming of the Lord Jesus. It is the word about His appearing. It is often used concerning His coming again, His appearing in glory, and Peter, in a very unusual way of using that word, brings it right back here to the Mount of Transfiguration, and says in effect, 'This was His appearing in glory, the same thing will happen at the end when He comes again; that is how He will come, it will be the same thing, the presencing of the Lord; it took place at the Mount.' So that, at the beginning the end was found; and the beginning immediately pointed to the end. The whole range of this dispensation and the gathering out of a people in this Son of Man to be glorified with Him, the whole range of it is gathered up in one act. It is a very impressive thing to see what a tremendous thing this Mount of Transfiguration was as gathering up all this dispensation, an exodus for and of a people conformed to the image of God's Son and ultimately glorified together with Him. "The power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ". I do not think there is any doubt but that here we see God's collective or corporate purpose in this dispensation, and that fulness only comes in that way.

But that is not all. We have here in this Mount a representation of that people, the church. The little variations in the account are tremendously interesting. Matthew says that He took Peter and James and John (Matt. 17:1). Luke says that He took Peter and

John and James (Luke 9:28). Of course they are both right. Why the alteration? Well, you can look at that; there is an answer, we will not stay with it. You can see the point in Luke. These are three of those to whom Paul referred when he spoke of pillars in the church, those who were apostles before him (Gal. 2:9; 1:17); and here are three of them, three of the main pillars of the church; Peter and John and James, a representation of a people to be called out for His Name. Let me say again, here you have the collective and corporate purpose of God.

Submission

These very men represent the basic principles of the church, principles that are found everywhere when you are dealing with the church. Peter represents a very vital factor in spiritual fulness. You can quite see that there is a big change-over or transition in Peter's life. When you have Peter in the Gospels with the Lord you have a man who, with all his eagerness, sincerity, warmth of nature, is not getting anywhere. He means well, he is tremendously intense, he will rush at any proposition but he does not get anywhere. He comes to a standstill every time, every time there is a kind of anticlimax with him until you come to the end of that history which is tragic. This man, who meant so well, was going so far, who intended and declared that he would go all the way, has completely broken down on all the things that he said he would do and in all the way that he said he would go. This man, so prominent, is marked by arrest, defeat, limitation, and, in a word, he is not getting anywhere. Then the cross and then the new Peter and he begins to get somewhere. The day of Pentecost sees him getting a long way; there is a good deal of fulness on the day of Pentecost in Peter and through Peter; and afterwards away up to the house of Cornelius, new fulness. He is getting somewhere. Peter lost all those things as he went on, which had been before arresting, limiting, defeating; he became a very real factor and representation of spiritual fulness in Christ. Read his letters and see the overflow in those letters. Words and

short sentences are immense in Peter's letters, mere fragments of statements there are vast in their range, in their content. Yes, Peter has moved out into fulness.

What is the secret? Well, that is what Peter is meant to set forth in the church, a spiritual principle. Why did Peter not get there in the beginning, why did he always stop short, why was there always this interruption and holding back and this final failure? Because Peter knew nothing of submission. He was a law unto himself, he had a mind of his own, a will of his own, a way of his own, an independence, a freelance kind of life, and he was all the time setting that will, that mind, that feeling of his against someone else and even against Christ. "You shall never wash my feet" (John 13:8). "This shall never be unto You" (Matt. 16:22). The Lord said, "Whither I go, you cannot follow Me now." Peter said, "Why cannot I follow You even now?" (John 13:36-37). "With You I am ready to go both to prison and to death" (Luke 22:33); setting himself all the time against the Lord. He knew nothing of submission. Then the cross, and afterwards there is a very real outworking of what the Lord had said to him, "When you were young, you girded yourself, and walked whither you would; but when you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry you whither you would not. Now this he spoke, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God" (John 21:18-19). This was not the way that Peter would have chosen, but he chooses it now. Listen to him in his letter: "The putting off of my tabernacle comes swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me" (2 Peter 1:14). Peter saw that whatever the form of death the Lord Jesus had mentioned it was now there, and he is accepting it. He would not have it before, the cross was an offence to Peter before, but he has learned this wonderful lesson of submission, not only to the Lord, but as one in the church, showing submission there, and he has come to a large measure of fulness. And here he is in the Mount of Transfiguration, a representation of one of the great principles of spiritual fulness, which is a sinking of individualism into the collective interests of the Lord, the independence into the dependence,

the separate into the related.

The Lord has said that it will be the church which will come to fulness. Then you have to get in there, get right into a related place, into a dependent place, among the Lord's people, where you are not asserting yourself but you are knowing fellowship and expressing fellowship; not running your way, but, even as Paul, getting the Lord's direction through the church, at Damascus, at Antioch. It is the way of fulness.

I know how familiar this is to many of you. I am quite sure the Lord wants this said. Although we have said this here for years, it is remarkable how, after things have been said and in theory known for years, people suddenly see it, and believe that the Lord's people are going to see what has been patent ever since Paul wrote his letters.

In a little pamphlet, a report was made of a conference concerning God's thought for the China Inland Mission. This is an extract.

"We found the keynote for our whole session in Ephesians 3:8-11. The whole letter speaks of God from eternity to eternity working according to plan. At this point in history — or, indeed, in our history as a Mission — what is His plan for us? Has He a place for us in the accomplishment of His eternal purpose? But the eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord is that NOW, the Good News having been preached to Jews and Gentiles, the full sweep of the divine wisdom is to be displayed to angelic rulers and authorities in the heavenly sphere — how? Through us as individuals? Yes in measure. Through the Mission? Yes, in measure. But mainly, primarily, through the channel of the church, the church which is His Body and through which, in a sense, He is actually being completed."

"We have come to see", the leaders say, "that the church, not individuals, not the mission", not evangelisation, it says later, as such, "but the church is the object of God in this dispensation", and they go on to say that everything must be to the church and through the church; not individuals and a mission. I think that is a

dispensational move; it is tremendous. But it has been here from the beginning.

And what has led to that question, what has led to that enquiry, to that conference? It has been a growing heart sense of the need of greater spiritual fulness of life and power and therefore effectiveness, and the quest for enlargement spiritually has been answered by a revelation¹ of the church. That is wonderful, praise God for that. May it happen everywhere!

My point is this: after years of knowing the theory, suddenly it comes like that, it breaks like that, and that is what I meant by saying that it is seeing Jesus, the Son of Man, glorified, seeing by revelation of the Holy Spirit. That is the way out, that is the basis of emancipation from limitation and bondage. Saul of Tarsus, or Paul as he was later, saw the Son of Man glorified, and that was done thereby which could not have been done by any other force on this earth. He was emancipated from his Jewish bondage, which was only one form of bondage to this world. He was out when he saw, and when he saw the Son of Man, he saw Jesus of Nazareth glorified. It is the secret of emancipation and enlargement. It is the way out for the church.

Spirituality

We spoke about Peter. Peter and John and James. John is again representative, a pillar, setting forth another great principle of the fulness of Christ. There is one word which explains John and it is the word 'spirituality'. When that is said, everything becomes alive and alight with John. Think of his Gospel: all the way through it is spirituality. The first wonderful chapter taking you back: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; a great spiritual unveiling. Spiritual birth in chapter 3; spiritual life welling up as a well within, chapter 4; spiritual Bread from heaven, chapter 6; spiritual sight to the blind, chapter 8; so you go on. It is spirituality all the way through. When you get to his

¹ By 'revelation' the author means experiential knowledge of a Biblical truth.

letters it is that, and also in the book of the Revelation. There is no coming to the fulness of Christ only as we are truly spiritual. We have a spiritual birth; "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"; but as we learn that the basis of our life is a spiritual life and we have to live on the basis of our spiritual life, that is not just drawing a distinction between spiritual and physical; there is another distinction drawn between spiritual and soulical, not living on our emotions, reasonings, desires and feelings and all that realm. That is where Peter lived beforehand. He lived a hundred per cent on his own soul, and, although that soul meant well and its motives were all quite good, it did not get him anywhere. It was not until the Holy Spirit came in and filled him and made him truly a spiritual man and he was governed by the Spirit that he moved on and never turned back; he went from fulness to fulness. "Of His fulness we all received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). John represents spirituality; it is the way of fulness.

That is a characteristic of the church. The church now is not a temporal thing, a thing of this world and this earth, an organization, an institution, and all that sort of thing. The church is a spiritual thing, our relationship as believers is a spiritual relationship in one spiritual life; everything is spiritual for the church. It is out of this world altogether and it cannot be understood by this world any more than the Lord Jesus could be when He was here. We shall only come to God's great end, the fulness of Christ, as we are constantly leaving behind that which is natural within and without, and moving with the Lord in the Spirit and so being changed and inwardly becoming more and more truly spiritual until that day when even these bodies shall be changed and we shall possess a spiritual body like unto the body of His glory. It is the consummation of a process of a spiritual character.

Suffering because of refusal to compromise

What are we going to say about James? You cannot be spiritual until you have learned to submit. That is the order here. John

follows Peter in spiritual order, and then James will come in in the right spiritual order. James, this James, was the first of the apostles to lay down his life for the testimony of Jesus. James stands therefore in the church as a representation of suffering because of no compromise, and the no compromise was with Herod, the Jew. We may talk about no compromise with the world, but what about traditional, worldly, earthly religion? It can be as much a menace to the fulness of Christ as anything else. No compromise with Herod the Jew means no compromise with an earthly religion. James suffered for that, and you know as well as I do that we can suffer a great deal more at the hands of religious people than at the hands of the world. Today those who are really seeking to go on with the Lord meet much more difficulty from Christians than they do from the world. Somehow or other the church has got into such a state that it is fighting, perhaps unwittingly, perhaps unintentionally, but it is fighting against real spiritual progress that is not made along its own traditional lines. James came right up against settled, established, accepted religion which had come into a world relationship as represented by Herod. Herod was a Jew with Jewish relationships, but holding a position in a Roman government. There is the link with this world, and James came up against that and he suffered unto death because he would not compromise with that. The church is called to that position, a spiritual, heavenly position, right outside of this world, to be spiritually in the mountain. Peter calls it the Holy Mount, "when we were with Him in the holy mount" — a place outside of this world. The church is called to that position, separation from this world even in a religious way, and when we take that position, we are going to meet opposition from the established system of things religiously, and we will be called upon, if not literally, yet truly day by day in a very real way, to lay down our lives, to lay down our souls.

I think I have said enough to indicate that here is the church in view in the Mount of Transfiguration. It is the corporate object that the Lord is after, to get that out by an exodus which Christ has accomplished for it, has wrought out for it, a people out, delivered for himself, to come to the fulness of Christ.

The headship of the Lord Jesus Christ

Another thing is here. Peter, of course, not knowing what he said, saw Moses and Elijah beginning to move away back into heaven and tried to arrest that departure and to lay his hands upon them, so to speak, and to hold them there, and he said, "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 'Don't let them go, keep them, let us make three tabernacles!' — bringing in his own feelings about things. There came out of the cloud a voice saying, "This is My beloved Son, my chosen: hear ye Him", and that contains a mighty principle of the church. The absolute Headship of Christ, the superiority, the supremacy of the Lord Jesus, that He is honoured as Lord, that His word is waited for, His mind is sought about everything. That is the whole story of the church in the first days. The Lord was Lord, He was Head over all things to the church, His mind was sought, His judgments were adhered to. Yes, they were in a state of hearing Him and that accounted for a lot. It accounted for the fulness of those days. He was Lord. That is very simple. It again brings in this fact, that the church is a Body under the absolute Headship of Christ and just in so far as that Headship is an established and active reality will the church move on in fulness. Our life individually and collectively depends upon the absolute sovereign Lordship and Headship of Jesus Christ for its spiritual increase.

FROM THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD'S SON

Reading: Ex. 12:1-14; Luke 9:28-31; Col. 1:13.

We have been thus far occupied with the exodus of the people of God from this world, from the authority of darkness, and their translation or transference into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. Two things have frequently been mentioned in the account of the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus. One is that it was immediately preceded by His statement that there were some who were standing there who should in no wise taste of death until they saw the Kingdom of God, or, as Matthew puts it, "till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom". The other thing is that it is immediately followed by the account of the Transfiguration, and in the midst that little clause with the specific and peculiar word which is translated in the old version and in the revised version, His 'decease' at Jerusalem. But it is really the word 'exodus'. So that, what is there in that transfiguration is the exodus accomplished by the Lord Jesus as the first of a new race of people for God, by which exodus He would lead them out, as Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt; and the leading out was unto a leading in. Paul puts it, "into the kingdom of the Son of His love"; that is, into the fulness of Christ.

The characteristic of the Kingdom of God's Son

At the outset, just a word about that Kingdom into which we,

through the cross of the Lord Jesus, are translated, the present Kingdom of the Lord Jesus, of the Son of God's love. The great characteristic of that Kingdom as it came in and as it continues, is spiritual power. You remember Peter, in speaking of his presence on the Mount of Transfiguration, tells us of what he saw. He said, "... when we made known unto you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ ... when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1:16-18). I am taking it that the Mount of Transfiguration was an anticipation of Pentecost, that is, the Son of Man glorified, the heavens opened, the power of God present, men going down under that power, and all that the Kingdom of Christ means is gathered up in that Mount of Transfiguration.

That being taken as settled, we can look on and see the full and abiding fulfilment of Christ coming in His Kingdom, as it took place on the day of Pentecost. For there is no doubt about it, the Kingdom came in on the day of Pentecost, and we know it came in in power. That day everything was a marvellous manifestation of the power of the Lord Jesus. Then we know how frequently in the book of Acts that word is used, from the very first chapter. After His resurrection He appeared unto them and spoke to them the things concerning the kingdom of God. The book of the Acts is the setting forth of the Kingdom of Christ and that particularly in terms of power. Well, we see it on the day of Pentecost and we see it chapter by chapter afterwards. There is the man at the Gate Beautiful, impotent, in the Name of the Lord Jesus raised up, set upon his feet. He being there at the Gate of the Temple typifies Israel in Israel's impotence, helplessness, for all those years of their history; but Israel refused the Lord Jesus and lost the Kingdom. "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). They lost the Kingdom. But this man accepts the Lord Jesus, believes on the Lord Jesus, and in the Name of Jesus of Nazareth is made to rise up and walk.

We will not go right through Acts indicating that it is a constant visitation of the Kingdom, the breaking in of the Kingdom, the intervention of the Kingdom in terms of power. God is laying the foundation for the dispensation, showing the principle that the Kingdom of Christ is a Kingdom of spiritual power, and He has broken into this world with that Kingdom in terms of spiritual power. And the church is the instrument of the Kingdom, or is called to be the instrument and vessel of the Kingdom's power, to set forth the Kingdom of the Son of His love. What I want to make clear at the outset is that the Kingdom has come in and that Kingdom is pre-eminently a Kingdom of spiritual power, and we are said to have been translated into that Kingdom.

The way to the power of the Kingdom

That brings us to the purpose which we so strongly feel to be God's purpose for our being together at this time, and a thing that He would say to His people if He had the opportunity. We have already said (and it is a thing too patent for observation) that the church knows very little of that power at this time. The power of the Kingdom of heaven, the Kingdom of God's Son, is not very widely manifest in and through the church at this time, and the great exercise of so many hearts is concerning this matter of the recovery of spiritual power. There is a very deep consciousness of powerlessness and we all share it, and so we are forced to some exercise and some enquiry.

What is the way to the power of this Kingdom? How can the Kingdom in power be known yet again? I am not thinking in the form of the manifestation of that power, in terms of miraculous demonstrations of that power so that everybody will rush after things and there will be a whole mixture again because of the signs and wonders. Not that — but that spiritual power which really does touch spiritual issues and meet spiritual need, mean the emancipation of a people for God Himself to be His own people in whom He has His satisfaction and His glory by reason of the real effectiveness and power in their lives. What is the way to that? Well, this is the way. We have read something about it in the book of Exodus, chapter 22, and what follows.

An utter inward separation from the realm of judgment and death

There is a realm of death. That is the first thing to take account of. There is a realm of death in which death operates, death is in possession; death because that realm lies under judgment. It is a whole kingdom with countless things in it, and it is under the judgment of God. The type is Egypt. We know of the judgments of Egypt, the ten plagues. The whole realm lay under judgment. Then this last great statement: "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments"; and the summing up of all judgment was in death. Death reigned because all lay under judgment. It is a very important thing for us to know, to recognise, to be guite clear about this and to have it registered in us very strongly as a settled thing that there still is a whole realm which lies under judgment and in that realm death operates, and we have seen what that meant for the people of God, the elect, to be in that realm. They could not direct their own course, they could not even make their own choice, they could not do their own work. They had no liberty, no strength, no resources. They may have had yearnings, longings, aspirations, perhaps sometimes a hope for better things, but it was all in vain; nothing was possible while they were in that realm. It lay under condemnation and death prevailed. The only way in which there is any possibility at all of their realising God's purpose for them, of His purpose being realised in them and through them and all that for which they were His chosen people being reached, was to get out of that realm, as we said earlier, to the last hoof, and with an unmistakable divide between them and that realm, a grave lying between.

The Passover lamb sets forth God's way out. That lamb bore the judgment which was there, and the lamb bearing that judgment had a twofold effect. For those who appropriated it by faith, it was their way out and right out of the judgment and out of the death. For those who did not do so, who persistently refused the known will of God, that very lamb sealed their doom. The lamb which for

some was deliverance and life, saw the settling of judgment and death for the others. It is always like that. The lamb was the way out because the lamb bore the judgment which made possible the removal of the death and their exodus into life.

But I am not staying now so much with the way out as the necessity for getting out. This secret of spiritual power through God's provided way out in the Lamb, appropriated by us and testified to, means that we are altogether outside of that realm of judgment and death. But that has got to be something more than it was with Israel. It has got to be an inward thing and not just an outward thing. There is a sense in which Israel, even after they were out of Egypt, were not out. For forty years they were not out in an inward way. They were constantly harking back to Egypt. Not until they passed the Jordan later on were they really out of Egypt, and that represents the work of the cross done in an inward way. It has got to be in an inward way that we are completely out.

Let me put it simply and precisely. There is no hope whatever of the spiritual power which is illustrated and typified in Israel being in the land over Jordan, having power over principalities and powers, over spiritual forces of evil, and power with men until there is a complete cut with that realm where judgment still rests and therefore death continues. There is a realm of life, but God will not have these two realms overlapping, the realm of death and the realm of life. Spiritual power is just in the measure in which we are out of that realm where judgment and death still abide.

Our brother Watchmen Nee, used to speak of 'the earth touch'. Sometimes he would go up to town and try to do some business and it did not succeed, and he would say, 'Brother, there was an earth touch today.' He would often describe things like that. When things did not respond, no life in them, when there was no response, no fruit, they just fell flat — 'An earth touch, brother, an earth touch!' He meant that he had evidently moved in other than in the Lord's way, the Lord's time, the Lord's mind and the Lord's purpose, and there was nothing in it; nothing happened. We know something about that, just where things are dead, leaden, unresponsive,

nothing doing. We know how, on the other hand, when the Lord is in a thing, you just have to touch it and it goes, it moves, and that is what I am talking about.

If we in an inward way touch that realm of the 'earth touch', if we have any spiritual contact with that realm, we lose out spiritually. Where we have a voluntary, chosen link with that realm - it may be a matter of how we use our free time, what we call our leisure, it may be our reading, our amusements, it may be one of a great number of things, the after-effect is death. Something has happened and spiritual weakness has set in, and the only thing to do is to have a spiritual bath, go back to the Lord, clean that up, get out of that realm. It is possible for us to do that thing continually until we lose the sense of our losing spiritually. There is a little statement in the Bible about those who were burnt, but did not know it. It is possible to lose spiritual sensibility like that, that we are being burnt and destroyed and we are unconscious because we have persisted in that way. It is a tremendous thing to be alive to the Spirit, so that when you touch something which lies in the realm under God's judgment and therefore death, you know it. You have a reaction to it inwardly, which is God's way of speaking to us and telling us quite clearly that is the way of death, judgment and the way of lost power or no power at all.

If only those forty years in the wilderness could have been blotted out, that the Passover had been to Israel what it was intended to be, what God meant it to be. Supposing on that Passover night, they had seen and accepted that this Passover means that Egypt is forever and utterly, root and branch, finished with and from this time we are for the Lord, no longer for ourselves in any way. If only they had gone through with that conception of things, that that is the meaning of the death and the resurrection set forth in that Passover, why, they would have gone through into the land. What happened forty years later in the swift conquest of Jericho and all the other kingdoms, could have followed within a very short time of their being out of Egypt, if only they had recognised and accepted the full significance of that Passover lamb. Forty years of up and

down, round and round, in and out, defeat and failure, murmurings, and at last that generation losing everything, perishing in the wilderness. All that need not have been, and yet God's sovereignty used it as a time of education and a time for our education as much as theirs, to show us how necessary it is to swiftly and fully apprehend God's thought in the cross.

God's thought in the cross is that we are thereby transferred through an exodus right out, transferred entirely to the last fraction from one realm of judgment and death to another realm of life and power. That is God's thought. So the need today for Christians and for the church is to recognise that spiritual power is just bound up with this whole question of separation unto God. Redemption is unto God. With Israel their redemption was so much unto themselves. Again it was only another form of self-life, appropriating God's power, God's mercy, God's activities, appropriating all that God was and could do to consume it upon their own lusts, for their own gratification. They failed to recognise that they were redeemed unto God. God's idea was that they should be unto Him.

And, if you want an example of that, take the Lord Jesus. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7). Now, while that will of God is something which applies to details and has got to be allowed to apply to the details of our lives, that is not just what the Lord Jesus meant when He said, "I come to do thy will." The will of God is a great comprehensive purpose. "Who works all things after the counsel of His own will" — that is connected with "according to the purpose" (Eph. 1:11, KJV). God has a great purpose which He has in counsel prepared before times eternal and then chosen us in relation to that counsel of His will, and in calling us, He has called us according to His purpose. That purpose, that counsel, is the will of God, something guite clearly defined, a great eternal purpose of God which He has purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was. That is the will of God, and being brought into Christ through the cross is being brought into the great eternal purpose of God which is His will.

What you and I must really settle is this, that we have not just

been saved to have a good time, to escape all the unpleasantness and misery of condemnation, judgment and God's disfavour, or to gain the blessings and advantages of going to heaven. That is not it. We are saved according to His purpose. We are saved, in other words, unto the will of God, and when we come to the Lord Jesus, what God means for us is this, that we are handing ourselves right up by the cross of Christ into that eternal will of God, and that, from that moment, as with Christ, as with us, we are here in relation to the will of God. Not until that is settled shall we have inward rest, neither shall we be able to get through all the difficulties that arise. Are you out for a good time for yourself? Well, you had better give up being a Christian. You are not going to have the good time that you are thinking of, as a Christian. Is that your motive, or is that your idea? You will have a good time in other ways, but not as you are thinking of it. There are a lot of people trying to be Christians and at the same time have a good time as people of this world have a good time, and they are making an awful mess of their Christian lives, but, what is more, they are in danger of missing God's eternal purpose.

Paul comes right in on this and says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what la the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1,2). It is impossible for us to move into that great comprehensive will of God which is His eternal purpose with which we are called until it is a whole burnt offering. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice ... and be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." An utter abandonment to the will of God makes it possible for you to know the will of God in that great comprehensive sense, to be in it and to be moving on to its glorious consummation. That is the realm of power.

That can be said in many ways. The way of power is to be in the way of God's will; the way of power is to be in the way of

God's eternal purpose. But you cannot be there and be all the time touching that realm with which God will have no dealings, which lies under His judgment and where death is. You cannot do it. The presenting of the body a living sacrifice, the whole burnt offering, is death to one realm and life in another.

So for us and for all the Lord's people today His word would be this. I feel that spiritual power, spiritual effectiveness, the registration of the power of the Kingdom in a spiritual way, demands a people who are right clean out of all touch with that which lies under judgment and death, having no contact with the death realm. And the church is in that realm, speaking generally. The church is very much in this world, very much in contact with the realm of condemnation.

That does not mean that it is only going into the things of this world which are obviously such. The world can be a very religious thing. It can almost be what we would call a devout thing. The world can have church buildings and all kinds of religious rites. The world can speak the language of Christianity. Yes, all that can be as much the world as anything else. It is something here which is not inwardly separated unto God.

This matter of being out of the realm of judgment and death, takes us a long way, touches very deep. It touches our motives, it lays bare the motives of our hearts. What is it we are really after? Sometimes every one of us is called upon to sit down and ask ourselves that question in the presence of discouragement or disappointment. I am losing heart, I am badly set back, my expectations have not matured. What was I expecting, what was I looking for, what really was I wanting? What in truth has been disappointed? And we will get a long way if we only answer those questions. We shall find that very often there was something in our hearts of a motive or an expectation which had to do with this life, with this earth, with things here which we could see, evidences and proofs tangible to the flesh. It is very gratifying to see that sort of thing and some people cannot live without it, "but my righteous one shall live by faith" (Heb 10:38). Well, this whole question of being in a

different realm goes very deep into our being, into our expectations and our hopes, our ambitions, our desires, our everything. Has the cross really done a deep inward separation between us and that with which the Lord is not associated and cannot be? That inward separation unto God in motive, interest, expectation, ambition and desire is the way of power. It is very true that we are weakened so often by our own expectations and hopes, and we give the enemy so much ground in that direction. There is still so much of this world in our very natures.

The realm of life

Well, we are brought out into this realm of life. It is a new realm. Of course, we do not know everything at once, we do not understand everything at once, but we are on a basis of a new education as to what is life and what is death. I am greatly impressed with the way in which the apostle speaks of this matter of knowledge. "That ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col. 1:9) — knowing the will of God by spiritual wisdom and understanding. What is spiritual wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of the will of God? It is just what I have been saying. Can we detect the difference between life and death? In other words, can we detect where the Lord is and where He is not by reason of this registration of life and death? If we can, we are able to say, I know the Lord is not in that; there is no life in it at all! You are getting spiritual wisdom and understanding and so you are knowing the will of God in that way. We so often think of knowing the will of God as a matter of being informed. If only the Lord would tell us what His will is about this! If only the Lord would say it to us — how much easier it would be! If the Lord would say, 'Yes, that is the way, take that way', in words, so that we heard Him saying it, life would be an easy thing. The Lord does not do that, and He does less and less of that as we grow up. Do not think that if the Lord talks to you like that, it is a mark of your spirituality. It is a mark of immaturity. The Lord always comes down to help babes.

As we grow spiritually, the Lord does not do that sort of thing. He is wanting, as the apostle puts it, that our spiritual senses should be exercised (Heb. 5:14) to know; and what are our spiritual senses? The very word 'spiritual' means the divine life senses, that we know by divine life sense, the sense of life, the law of the Spirit of life, and the knowing of God's will in ever-growing fulness will come that way, that we are more and more able to discern between life and death in the ways before us, and in things presented to us. This is the way of life or this is not the way of life. That is the education of the child of God and it is for everyone. Please do not think this is something beyond you and outside the true Christian life or the ordinary Christian life. This is the normal Christian life according to the Word of God, that every one of us, if we are in Christ, are supposed to have a renewed spirit possessed by the Holy Spirit Who will seek to tell us by spiritual sense: 'That is death and this is life; you cannot go there because that is death, the way of spiritual arrest; this is the way of life.' So we choose life, and as we do it, that sense grows, that ability to discern increases, and so we know the will of God more and more fully along that line. We have to come into the realm of life. But the Lord wants us to learn to live and move by the life which is the law of the new realm into which we have been transferred. This is spiritual knowledge and spiritual understanding.

The emphasis of this time is that this is the way of power, the way of a complete separation between that realm of this world in a spiritual way, the realm of this world which lies under judgment and death, and our being wholly in the realm where life obtains and governs.

THE ENEMY'S PURSUIT

"... who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13).

We have been seeing that the cross of the Lord Jesus was for Himself and His church what the exodus was for Israel, that the cross was a mighty exodus, a way accomplished, a way wrought out, for translation from one kingdom to another.

In our previous meditation, we were trying to make it clear that there are two very definitely distinct realms, one whole realm lying under judgment and death; the other, the risen life of liberty and power. The cross stands between those two realms and in the thought of God closes the former conclusively to believers and calls for completely living in the realm where life is the law and the power. We were seeking to emphasise the absolute necessity, if there is to be power and effectiveness, for not touching in any way inwardly, and having no link with that whole realm which is under God's ban.

Now we are going to follow that by a further consideration, Pharaoh's persistent pursuit to lay a hand upon the people, even after they had departed. We know that he pursued with a view to bringing them back, and, even when his hosts were swallowed up in the Red Sea, we can still see right on through the whole wilderness forty years the insinuating of Egypt, the working of that dead hand seeking in some inward way to bring them back into bondage and under that old authority, for in their hearts, we are told, they turned back to Egypt. There was still the outreach to bring them back again into the place where God would not be with them and where

their spiritual power, testimony and effectiveness were completely nullified.

I do want to say this before we go further, that we are dealing with a thing which has an immense amount of ground in the Word of God. This is not just some small thing, some small part of truth. If you look at it, you will see that there is a sense in which the whole Bible is occupied with this thing – the persistent effort and work of the enemy to get the people of God in some way, by some compromise, back under his power and to destroy them as the people of God, to rob them of their inheritance, to nullify their testimony, to throw them into complete weakness as the Lord's people here on this earth. There is a sense in which the whole Bible is taken up with that fact. The Old Testament is just full of it, and we shall see later that the New Testament very largely occupies itself with this matter.

We begin by seeing that, in the revelation of God, firstly through the typical channel, the channel of the type of Israel, and then through the full truth spiritually of the New Testament, the Lord has set forth clearly and unmistakably that the cross of the Lord Jesus does in His mind set forth the fact that His people are a people of an entirely different realm from all others, and that their break with an old realm is complete in the cross of Christ. That is only to say that the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is a final "No" to a certain entire realm of things. That cross closes the door once and for all to everything that lies in a certain realm, and to all that, God most positively by that cross says, No! never! To everyone who really does claim and profess to have accepted the cross of the Lord Jesus and its meaning and value, a certain realm in the mind of God is closed. They are regarded as belonging to another realm which has its own features, which are altogether different and new and have got to be learned all over from the beginning again from A.B.C. It is an entirely new creation with a new life, a new order of things, a new mind, everything new. It is different; and God has put this divide and there is no bridge. That is God's mind.

Of course, in the case of the Lord's people, that is not true. There are many bridges, there are many links, but that is just what we are dealing with. Those bridges, those links, those associations, are the cause of defeat, weakness, ineffectiveness, and inability to move forward in power. Therefore Satan is always watching vigilantly, keenly, for an opportunity of in some way restoring a link with his realm, bringing about some kind of association.

Now, what we have to learn is the nature of a link with the realm to which God says, No! The nature of such links is a life education. The New Testament is just full of them, but that is a part of our great spiritual education, to understand what it is to which God says, 'No!' — as well as, of course, on the other hand, what it is to which God says, 'Yes!' That is the realm of our spiritual education and growth. That is what we are all learning as we go on, what the Lord agrees with and what He disagrees with, and we have to learn that in an inward way, not by being told outwardly, but by an inward instruction of the Holy Spirit.

We have said that the work of the enemy in order to destroy the life and power of the church, is to bring about those links and associations with what is banned by God, and that he has sought to do that all through history. You can see it in the case of Israel. The enemy never gave it up. From the first pursuit of Pharaoh and the reach out even into the wilderness, right on even over Jordan, he went on with it. Achan very early in Israel's history on the other side of the Jordan brought them all to a standstill. The glorious conquest and progress which had begun was suddenly held up; everything was checked. Something had gone wrong. When investigation was made, it was found that Achan had taken something of the forbidden thing. It was a touch with the realm of this world under Satan's power, and not until that thing was rooted out and destroyed utterly together with all that was connected with it, was Israel able to go on again. That is the type.

So we come to the spiritual reality of this in the New Testament. When we get past the cross as an actuality, the cross in which God has said His 'No!', the church comes in, and then the history of the church is the history of this making the cross effective in that very connection.

The cross God's great divide

The first of the letters in the order in which we have them (and we have often said that there is a divine overruling in the order of these letters; they are not in the order in which they were written, but I am quite sure it is the spiritual order of things that we have) is the letter to the Romans. This most definitely brings the church face to face with this fact that, in the cross of the Lord Jesus, the church is a crucified and risen thing. We are all so familiar with Romans 6, the great identification chapter, identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, and that whole letter stands there at the very threshold of the church's spiritual history to say, 'By the cross of the Lord Jesus, you have been crucified to all that old realm, the world, the flesh, the devil, judgment, condemnation, death, sin, self, crucified with Christ. Now you are on new ground, resurrection ground, on the ground of the Spirit, walking no longer after the flesh but after the Spirit, sons of God led by the Spirit of God, not having the mind of the flesh, but the mind of the Spirit.' Romans sets forth, then, simply, very emphatically, this fact, that the cross stands right at the beginning of the church's spiritual history to represent God's great divide, and the subsequent history has got to be a coming into line with that and all that that means.

The pursuit of the enemy

a) Glorying in the flesh

You pass from Romans to 1 Corinthians and you have the great counter to the cross. If ever there was an example and illustration of the earth touch, 1 Corinthians is that. There it is the earth touch and it is also the death touch. You know how the letter begins, what Paul has to say about the wisdom of this world. Evidently Corinth was a place where the flesh gloried along the line of worldly wisdom. To be full of worldly wisdom was all their glory; to them such wisdom was power, such knowledge was power. And that is

carried right into the church. That was their mentality, and even the Gospel, even the cross of Christ, was being preached in the wisdom of men, and Paul puts his finger right upon the subtlety and says that thereby it is nullified, made vain. The very preaching of the cross of Christ in the wisdom of men nullifies the cross. What subtlety of the enemy, bringing the Lord's people, even while they are preaching the cross, into a place of spiritual paralysis or back into bondage because it is preached in the wisdom of men, the link with the old realm. No, the cross of Christ cannot be preached with power under divine anointing and unction other than by the Spirit of God, the wisdom which is from above.

Then he goes on, "There are divisions among you; one says, 'I am of Paul' and another, 'I am of Apollos', and another 'I am of Peter', and yet another, 'I am of Christ'. When ye say *I*, says the apostle, are ye not as men?" You see the old realm coming in, dividing the Lord's people up after men. What a lot of history there is in that and of that right through the Christian centuries, bringing the church down onto this earth, making it a man's thing, circling in groups around this man and that man right down here on this level, and so Satan has weakened, defeated, robbed. It is the outreach of the prince of this world again to bring the church back into captivity under his authority, to spoil her. "Are you not as men?" — seeming to say quite clearly, You must not be as men in the natural sense.

We cannot go through the whole of the letter, but you will see by this very indication the realm in which the Corinthians were. The fact is that they were glorying in the flesh, making everything of Christ to serve the glory of the flesh, even spiritual gifts. Paul is saying, 'You are taking hold of spiritual gifts and making them the gain of your own fleshly glorying. You have this gift and that, and by your gift you are bolstering up the flesh, being something important, making spiritual things the means of a fleshly spectacle.' There is a lot of history in that, and the devil is in it.

That is why the apostle brings the whole of that question up to the matter of love. The flesh does not get much look in when the love of Christ is coursing and surging through the heart. You can see the point. Here in Corinth it was a tragic state. It was lost testimony, lost power, because the great meaning of the cross was countered there. The cross means a finish with that whole realm where Satan has authority. In other words, we have been delivered out of the authority of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of the Son of God's love, and that has got to be an applied truth, an actual reality, and all such things as we find in that letter have got to go. Satan holds nothing too sacred to use for his own ends. For example, he breaks right into the Lord's Table, and he has done that many times and in many places since and turned it into something selfish to gratify personal ends and desires, and so it is nullified. It is this old link.

b) Bondage to the law

From Corinthians we move to Galatians, and it is only another form of the outreach of that old Pharaoh. The Galatians had evidently had a very real experience. They had come over onto the right ground. "You were running well", says the apostle. Satan had come along the line of traditional religion, historical religion, the accepted religious order, Judaism, and sought to bring those believers down again from their heavenly position in Christ on to the earth level, to make the Christian life something of ordinances and ceremonies and all this sort of thing. 'Except ye be circumcised, you cannot be saved!' — from the spiritual to the natural. Paul makes it perfectly clear presently that circumcision is not a thing of the flesh at all — it is a thing of the heart, it is an inward thing, and all these rites and forms have a spiritual meaning and now in Christ it is the spiritual thing that matters. But they were saying, Conform! — to bring the people of God down on to an earthly level while still being devoutly religious, to have them back in bondage. Galatians is the letter concerning spiritual bondage to the law, coming again into bondage. It is the outreach, the link.

The more there is of outward forms, the more there is of spiritual death, the less there is of spiritual life. You can sense it if you are spiritual. There are many grades of it. Some of us have been into

St. Peter's in Rome and we have been very glad to get out. The very atmosphere is death, something awful, you cannot breathe spiritually in there. There you have the very last word in ritual, and to look at the people as they worship, you would think them most devout. On the occasion of the feast of Corpus Christi these people almost go off their heads with religion, but oh, the death, the awful death! And from that extreme, whatever degree you have of that kind of thing, you have proportionate spiritual death, and where you have the simplicity that is in Christ, where it is just spiritual worship, worship in spirit and in truth, not in this mountain or in that, not as to ecclesiastical buildings and so on, not as to tradition and history, there you have life.

That is the substance, the essence, of the Galatian letter, and it was for that that Paul was fighting for Galatia, for spiritual life, spiritual power and spiritual effectiveness. He saw that the devil was coming in and reaching out again along this line of Judaism, spiritual legalism or religious legalism, to bring the church into a place of defeat and failure. Paul says some very strong things: "You are fallen from grace", "You did run well", "Who has bewitched you?" That is our English way of putting it. What he literally said was, "Who has cast the witch's spell over you?" We know who casts the witch's spell. These letters are all in some way the Lord's effort to save from that hand which is following, that pursuing foe that pursues right on to the end, to seek to bring about some kind of inward link between the Lord's people and the old realm, the old territory where Satan has power and authority. The letters are written to get the Lord's people to maintain their position as by the cross completely severed from that realm.

c) False spirituality

You come to the letter to the Ephesians where you are in the heavenlies in Christ. You are in the right realm there, and when you are there, you are able to make war upon the principalities and powers, the world-rulers of this darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness. You can make war on them when you have the right

position, and everything in that letter is spiritual fulness, fulness of revelation, fulness of life, fulness of power: "the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion." That is the realm of the heavenlies, that is out of the old realm completely. Even when the church has come to know something of that as in Ephesians, the enemy does not stop.

You go on to Colossians. It is so revealing to see that in this spiritual order of things, even when you have the church there in the heavenlies, the enemy still pursues. When Israel was over Jordan in the land and in the way of conquest, there is Achan. The enemy has not given up, even in the heavenlies. The sons of God appear before God and Satan was among them (Job 1:6). Somehow or other he seems to get up there as well. In Colossians the church is in the heavenlies, but in Colossians what is it? "Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels." If the enemy cannot make you carnal, he will make you falsely spiritual. He will give a twist to your spirituality so that it is really ascetism and not spirituality at all. A lot of people are mistaking ascetism and mysticism for spirituality. That is what you have in Colossians: worshipping of angels, false spirituality. Yes, they believe in angels, they believe in spirits, they believe in those high intelligences, these heavenly bodies, they are occupied with them, giving them a great place, but it is purely mystical and ascetic. What does the apostle say about it? "If you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God." The death and the resurrection are brought in again, and show that this thing, though so seemingly spiritual, is after all, sensual, and sooner or later it will show itself in a sensual way as these things ever have done. The whole of Greek mysticism was that. It worked itself out in horrible sensuality and yet took the semblance of something high and wonderful in a mystical, and what they would call, a spiritual way. It was against

that that the apostle was fighting, the devil coming along the line of a false spirituality. Oh, beware of your spirituality. It can become just your own soulish intensity. The whole question is, is it really life, divine life, spiritual power? Does it result in spiritual increase, growth, purity, conformity to the image of Christ, or is it just strain in a spiritual realm? Satan brings many people under arrest by a false spirituality when he cannot bring them under arrest along the line of obvious carnality.

I must just leave these discriminations with you and you must ponder them, and if you cannot understand, this is what it amounts to, that there are two realms and one is the realm of death and the other is the realm of life, and by the cross of the Lord Jesus we are regarded as having been transferred from the one to the other; and Satan is always trying in some way, by direct assault, pressure, persecution, adversity, or by some subtle subterfuge, even along religious lines, to bring us back again under his power. Our business is not to be occupied with Satan all the time, but to seek to know what it means to walk in the Spirit. Take the positive line. Do not be introspective, always going in, examining, analysing everything, occupied with the enemy. Take the positive line of seeking constantly to live and walk in the Spirit and you will know.

What do we mean by walking in the Spirit? Do you ask the Lord about everything? Do you make your plans and programmes for your days without asking the Lord quite definitely whether that is what He wants? That is what I mean by walking in the Spirit for one thing, submitting everything to the Lord and doing everything by close consultation with Him, letting our whole life come under His government in every detail. It need not be a burden; we can spread the whole thing out before the Lord. But it does necessitate a close touch with Him, just a lifting of the heart to the Lord about present questions. We can do it anywhere, not that that is to take the place of quite serious times with the Lord. People have said to me, I can lift my heart to the Lord anywhere, at any time, and it is usually a way of excusing themselves from real definite times with the Lord. That is dangerous.

It is so necessary, in order to be saved from spiritual death and from being brought into bondage and defeat, that we should walk in the realm in which we have been placed and that we should stay there. Walk in the Spirit and the enemy will be defeated in his outreach to bring us back into bondage.

THE BATTLE FOR LIFE

Reading: Ex. 12:12-13; Rev. 1:17-18.

The great reality upon which the church stands and upon which every true believer stands is the nullifying of death. That is clearly what is shown to be the very foundation of Israel's life as a people separated unto God. Death reigned and the death that overtook the Egyptians would have overtaken Israel if for them it had not been nullified. Their going out and their history was founded upon that great reality. Death was swallowed up in victory, death was nullified. That is what the New Testament makes perfectly clear to be the foundation of the life of the heavenly Israel, the spiritual Israel, the church of God, therefore of every member thereof.

But when that is said and recognized, there is something more. The great battle is still raging. In a sense the battle was fought through to a finish in the cross of the Lord Jesus, and the complete victory secured. That is one side of the truth. The other side of the truth is that the battle goes on. But it is another aspect of the great work of the nullifying of death. The battle which the church is now called upon to wage is against that work of Satan by which he seeks to neutralise the church's deliverance from death.

We were seeing a little in our previous meditation of how the enemy still pursues with the intent to neutralise what has been done. The enemy wants, so far as our experience and enjoyment is concerned, and so far as the great fruit and outcome of that victory is concerned, to nullify the victory, to get a victory over victory, to neutralise the effective working of that life by which death has been

conquered, and that work of the enemy, we were seeing, is along the line of trying to form links of some kind, in some way, with his own realm where he has his rights and his authority, the realm which lies under God's judgment. He wants to re-establish some kind of link with his realm is his way to neutralise the great victory of the Lord Jesus in the church's experience. He cannot neutralise it in itself, he cannot undo the work which the Lord has done and which is established forever in heaven, but, so far as the church's life, experience and testimony are concerned, he can do it, he has done it, he is doing it and he is pressing hard to do it.

We have come to this book of the Revelation. The messages to the churches in chapters 2 and 3 of this book have wholly and solely to do with this very question, the question of life in its victorious power. The great issue here is life. If you look into these letters, you will find many things that are quite good, many things about which Christians may boast. Orthodoxy is there mentioned; work for the Lord even to the point of labour — "your toil and your patient endurance"; sincerity — "you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false" (Rev. 2:2, ESV); reputation — "you have a name that you live"; many things like that. The church thinks a lot of them. Some people think if they are orthodox, sound in doctrine, that is all that is required. The Lord Jesus comes to all those churches, and, while taking account of things that can be commended, things that are good and right, He makes it perfectly clear that these things in themselves do not justify the continuance of their remaining as vessels of testimony. He is very utter about it. He says, "I will ... remove your lampstand from its place".

What is the issue upon which everything is judged, if it is not these things? They are of value in themselves and in their place, and they must have a place, but they are not the ultimate and the primary thing.

The issue is that which comes in with Him in the presentation of Himself, and that is exactly the reason why He presents Himself in this way right at the outset. "I ... am the Living one; and I became

dead, and behold, I am alive unto the ages of the ages, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." Now, that is the plummet, that is the line, that is the issue, to that the churches are brought; it is just in so far as they really are the vessels of His risen triumphant life, just as they are the vessels of the testimony to the fact that death has been nullified. You can have orthodoxy and be perfectly sound, and yet there be spiritual death. You can be full of labours for the Lord, and yet there is no impact of this mighty, death-conquering life. You can have many things, but that being absent means that the very thing which is the justification of the church's existence, the very foundation of its being, is lacking. "I am the Living one" — and it is as though He said, Now then, all of you, measure up to that! The lampstands are called upon to be the vessels of a burning testimony to Him and in terms of life overcoming death, or which have overcome death; the Lord Who has conquered death.

What the Lord seeks in the churches

Just pass your eye over these messages to the churches.

Ephesus — "To him that overcomes, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life" — overcomes what? — the loss of the vital thing, "your first love". People who are really in the good of His risen life manifest His love in a wonderful way. Where love is at low ebb, you will always find strife, strain in relationships, divisions, and so on.

Smyrna — "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life \dots He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

Pergamum — "To him that overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna." It does not require very much knowledge of the Word to understand the hidden manna, that secret thing which came from heaven in the wilderness, and the people said, What is it? Manna is a mystery, the life of their life in the wilderness, the very basis of their subsistence. It was their life. There is a secret hidden life which supports those who are in a right living relationship with the Lord even in the midst of such conditions as were

found at Pergamum.

Thyatira — while life is not mentioned, the opposite is. "I will kill her children with death." The issue is all in this connection, with life and death.

Sardis — "You have a name that you live, and you are dead \dots He that overcomes \dots I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life."

Laodicea — the word 'life' is not used, but it is quite clearly in view — "neither hot nor cold". "You say, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing." "Because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of My mouth." It is the life question again.

So it is throughout. The hallmark of a people individually and collectively in right relationship with the Lord and in alignment with His purpose is not only that they hold the truth and are sound in doctrine and full of good works and many other things. The hallmark is that the Lord risen from the dead and triumphant over death is recognized in them and in their midst. The doctrine may be all right, much of the teaching may not be possible of comprehension by many, most of the things may not be understood for the moment. But the question is, is the living Lord in the midst? Then we can suspend all other things if we are sure of that. Is the power of life there in Christ? That is the answer.

The enemy's efforts to counter life

Now you can see again as you glance through these messages, that the trouble was that Satan had been able in so many cases to restore a link with his own kingdom. I only need to put my finger upon one. This is not an exposition of these letters. It is just to indicate a principle, a truth. "You have there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." You need to look again at the story of Balaam, who could not curse Israel and bring Israel under a curse — that is,

remove Israel from the ground of divine favour, the ground typical of justification by faith; for the Lord looked on Israel and, through Balaam, He uttered these words, "I have not found sin in Israel" (Numbers 23:21). Yet look at what Israel were in themselves. The Lord was looking upon them on covenant ground, on the ground of the precious blood, and was able to proclaim on that ground that they were sinless in His sight, and Balaam was not able to remove them from that ground of justification and bring them under a curse, under condemnation, and therefore under death in a direct way.

But there was covetousness in his heart, which is idolatry. I wonder if you notice that Balak sent to Balaam and offered him great treasures if he would curse this people. He said, I cannot; though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more! That is splendid. And he kept the messengers overnight and prayed to the Lord throughout the night, and the Lord said, "If the men are come to call thee, rise up, go with them; but only the word which I speak unto you, that shall you do." Balaam set out in the morning and on the way the Lord met him and sought to slay him. You may say, 'Strange ways of God, unfair, unrighteous!' God had told him to go, and then sought to slay him! But God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). He saw in Balaam's heart that there was not a clear divide between this covetousness, the reward of iniquity, and the glory of God. He went, and was compelled to bless and bless again, and he lost his reward of iniquity, and his heart was still covetous, so later on he went round to the back-door and showed how Israel could be destroyed. He taught Israel to commit fornication. What was that? — idolatry, that is all; and Israel was undone. A link was formed with Satan's kingdom and Satan undid Israel by that thing. How subtle the devil is. If he cannot come straight in and get what he is after at the front-door, he will go round to the back-door to get a subtle link in an indirect way with a view to undoing. "You have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam."

We know how Jezebel gained position in Israel, and what influ-

ence she had over Ahab and what a condition resulted in Israel which headed up to Mount Carmel; the awful state of things in Baal worship. There was a link with this condemned realm, a link right from the very heart of Israel with terrible results: defeat, weakness and ineffectiveness, lost testimony, lost power.

These are indications. There are others in these letters of this very thing, that life is assailed, the great power and testimony of life, of Christ's resurrection, of Christ the life, the very meaning of the church's existence is assailed by getting some link with Satan's kingdom for the church's undoing.

Life by the blood of the Lamb

But we are on the life side. We have been on the death side for two days. We are on the life side today, and we take account of that precious blood. Death was annulled by the blood of the Lamb. That blood, as it was sprinkled, placed where all could see, was a proclamation, a testimony, something which was telling forth that one had died. A lamb had died, and in that death it had taken the judgment and the ground of judgment and death, and through death, had destroyed death and him that had the power of death. The testimony of the sprinkled blood is just that death is nullified.

I close by just reminding you of this, that in this book of the Revelation, the Lord is seen coming out to judge the nations, to judge the world. As you move on, you find kingdoms arraigned before Him, all systems of this world will be brought into His presence and judged right through to finality and cast out.

But before the Lord can touch the nations and the things of this world, He has to deal with His church. He must deal with the church on this issue. He cannot bring final judgment until He has dealt with the church. The word is, "Judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17); He must deal with the church, the church as represented here and there, the church in the churches; He must deal with His own on this one issue.

This is an end-time matter. Anyone with any spiritual perception

can see that this is what the Lord is after today. You find that every time there is an attempt or an essaying to touch the world with the Gospel in any special effort, those concerned find themselves incapable of getting out there until they have dealt with Christians. You are swung back to the Christians, you are swung back to the church. Things begin with us. Our testimony to the world and the Lord's dealing with the world demands that there shall be in the world a company which represents the very thing for which He died and rose. The very embodiment of His testimony He must have; if He cannot have it in the whole, He must have it in the overcomers, but He must have it, and the overcomers become His ultimate vessel of this testimony of His life.

It is a mighty battle. The battle goes on within our own selves, within our own midst, within the church. It goes on outside, this battle to keep a clear place, a clean state, a place of absolute separation unto God so that the life is unarrested, unchecked, unrestrained and Satan is not able to nullify this testimony. John conceived of himself as being in the isle of Patmos for that very testimony, an exile there for the testimony of Jesus. What is the testimony of Jesus for which he suffered, for which the church suffers? It is this: "I am the Living one; I became dead, and I am alive for evermore and have the keys (that is, the authority) of death and of Hades." That victory, power, authority over death and hell is vested in the risen Lord. That is the testimony, and that is not a testimony merely in word, something to say. We would all accept that testimony as something to declare, but it is something that has got to be rooted in us, manifested through us, that in us Christ is triumphant over death, that death is swallowed up victoriously in us. What is the impression we give, our influence? Is it one of death, of Satan's power, authority, dominion, doing as he likes with us, crushing us under, or is ours a true living testimony that Jesus lives, that in the common bush of the desert there is a flame which goes on, and the bush is not consumed? That is the testimony of Jesus. The Lord maintain that testimony in us as companies of people where we are, and as individuals.

THE SPIRITUAL POSITION INTO WHICH WE ARE DELIVERED

Reading: Acts 2:22-24,33

In those verses, four notes of the dispensation are struck. They form the harmony, and those notes will be found to be constantly recurrent right through the rest of the New Testament as representing God's complete foundation for the church, and when we say 'the church' we mean the life of every child of God. Those four notes are the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ and the exaltation of Christ. Those of you who are familiar with your New Testament will immediately recognise that they are the things which govern throughout; what they represent, that is, as to spiritual values and spiritual laws of the new creation life. My thought just now is only to refer as briefly as possible to the basic significance of each.

The death of Christ

The death of Christ, the first of the fourfold foundation of the Christian life of the church. The death of Christ is shown by the Word of God to mean the removal out of the way of everything that occupies the place of God. The death of Christ is a mighty clearance to make possible something altogether new. In His death, He representatively and inclusively gathered up the sinful creation and took it away — in the type of the Old Testament scapegoat — into the land of forgetfulness, put it out of God's sight. As a thing wholly

rejected and under condemnation, He put it away, and what I want to emphasize just now in that connection is this, that, in the death of the Lord Jesus, He not only put away what men call sins and sin, but He put us away. That is not new light for most of you, but that does not matter. We need to be brought constantly back to that fact that it is not only something about us of which God does not approve that has been put away, but that we, in the totality of our old creation state and make-up, have in the representative person of Jesus Christ, been taken away into death, put out of the way. Until that is recognised, accepted and established with its implications and unto an ever-growing consciousness of how many and great those implications are, until we have entered into something of the meaning of that, the true foundation is not laid. Any lesser interpretation or apprehension of the death of Christ than that will mean an inadequate and a very unsatisfactory Christian experience. That He took our alms and bore them in His own Body on the tree is a blessed truth, but it is only part of the whole. If there is going to be a strong, established, consistent, and ever-progressive and growing Christian life, it will only be as we recognise that we died in Him, that His death was the great removal of man by nature, which means that we, with all our own natural judgments, ideas, conceptions, ambitions, wishes, desires, inclinations, all our will and choice, all our feelings about things, likes or dislikes, all that is put aside by God and has no place. "It is no longer I" (Gal. 2:20), says Paul, in his great inclusive and conclusive statement. And to bring in any of our plans, our ways, our likes, our preferences, our choices, our intentions, our programmes for life, our aims, our objects, is to contradict the fundamental meaning of the cross, and to put something in the way of God, in the way of the realisation of all His intention through the cross of the Lord Jesus in our life.

So the cross does become the great demand for a full and final 'No', or, as the Lord put it, denying ourselves (Matt. 16:24); not denying ourselves of certain things, but denying ourselves, lock, stock and barrel. "Lay your treasure in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks; and the Almighty will be

your treasure" (Job 22:24), but not before. I do feel that word of emphasis is very necessary for us all.

May I ask, especially of the younger Christians who have their lives so much before them, is God going to have all that He wants, all that His heart is set upon? Is He really going to be able to achieve His purpose through us on this earth so that at the end we shall be able to say, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7), I have fulfilled God's purpose as far as it was possible for Him to reveal it to me, to have that deep sense that we have not missed the way, not missed God's best, we have not come short of what He intended. If we are going to have that blessed issue to our course, it can only be as there is positively and fully established that for myself and for all that this world means, I have died. Death has taken place. That is exactly what baptism meant in the New Testament times. It was a very costly thing for people then. For the Jew it meant death to Judaism. To the Gentile it meant death to paganism. Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

It is most necessary that we get through on this, because otherwise our lives will be a confusion; our lives will be weak, we shall be missing the mark, missing the way, missing the goal, and we shall be in the way of a terrible heartbreaking remorse at the end. We may have gained in this world and we may have gained position, reputation and possessions, and missed what God had for us. And to wake up to that will mean something incomparably grievous and sad. If that is not to be so, it is necessary for us to recognise that my apprehension of Jesus Christ as crucified means my identification with Him in that death. I died when He died. It is getting something out of the way. Do not think that it is all loss. You may have to count the cost, it may mean struggle, battle, it may involve a great deal, but God is only removing out of the way that which is in the way of something infinitely greater. He is removing the temporal for the eternal, the transient for the permanent, the earthly for the heavenly, the corruptible for the incorruptible. These are the great contrasts drawn in the New Testament. "They do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" (1 Cor. 9:25) Well, that is fundamental.

The resurrection of Christ

The second thing in this fourfold foundation is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Come on to the positive side from the negative. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus always carries one thing with it in the New Testament, and it is that now everything is for the Lord. It is on a new basis. "One died for all, therefore all died" (2 Cor. 5:14), "and He died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15). That is the resurrection side of the cross, that it is all now unto the Lord. Is that what the cross means in the case of everyone of us? We accept it as doctrine. Is it really true that we are consumed to the last drop of our vitality for the interests of God, that we are here on this earth only for God, or have we got mixed interests, the other things that we want and are after, and we try to run the two things? We will have this bit and so much of what represents the Lord's interests, and then we must go off and have something else also to keep things, as we say, fresh and lively. We are mixing things up. The things of the Lord are only a weariness to those people whose hearts are not wholly for the Lord. The things of the Lord are no weariness to those who are really undivided in their hearts. Our resurrection union with the Lord means that it is all the Lord, and anything weak in those foundations means a very unsatisfactory Christian life in which the Lord is not getting all that He has a right to, and it means that, while we may be children of God, born-again sons, forgiven, Pharaoh is using us to build his cities, he is using our lives for his ends and God is not getting all the good of our new life.

The ascension of Christ

The third part of the foundation is the ascension of Christ, and if you look again at your New Testament, you will find that the ascension of Christ always has something associated with it. It is not just an historical fact, not a bit of Christian doctrine that says that Jesus rose from the dead and went back to heaven, was received up into glory. That is a fact, but there is something associated with that which is of tremendous importance, significance and value to the Christian life and to the church. It means this, that everything now through this dispensation where the church is concerned, where the Christian life is concerned, is outside of this world, is in heaven, is heavenly in its nature, in its vocation, in its resource. The ascension of Christ is the great denial and contradiction to the church becoming an earthly thing and the Christian becoming a worldly thing. He has gone up and He is outside and after His resurrection He never appeared to the world again. He went out and is drawing out. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself" (John 12:32). The outworking is that He is drawing people out of the nations, out of everything that belongs to this old corrupt broken-down chaotic creation, drawing out for a heavenly Body, not made up of Jews, Greeks, British, American, Chinese, Indian, French, German and all the rest. No, not any one of these exists in His sight at all, only one new man, that man Christ in corporate realisation, a heavenly thing altogether. Many people think of 'all one in Christ' as meaning that you can be a hundred different things but you just decide not to mention them. You will not mention that you are a Baptist, a Congregationalist, a Methodist. You are all those things, but you will not mention it. That is not the meaning. We are all one man in Christ, and that a heavenly man of a new order and that is basic to the church's existence, that is fundamental to the dispensation, that is a new consciousness for members of the new creation in Christ.

The exaltation of Christ

Finally, the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. "Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this" (Acts 2:33). What is the practical expression of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus so far as the church is concerned and so far as Christians are concerned? It is the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in life. He is exalted. But how do you know? The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost and not only bore witness to the fact that Jesus was exalted as a truth, but demonstrated that fact, took things right into His own hands, that is, as it were, into the hands of the Lord Jesus, and carried them from that moment in His own hands, and so the book of the Acts is a wonderful record of man's ideas and judgments being set aside. Even when consecrated men, with the purest motives and the best intentions, essay to go in a certain direction or do a certain thing, waiting on the Holy Spirit in their hearts about it, they found their course diverted. "The Spirit suffered us not", they said; "essaying to go, we were forbidden of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 16:6-7). The Spirit was sovereign, the Spirit of Jesus was Lord in their hearts, and that is the exaltation of the Lord Jesus made practical here, and that is absolutely fundamental. The church will have a very chequered course and a very defeated experience until it comes under the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, which is only saying under the Headship of the exalted Lord. "He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named ... and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Eph. 1:20-23). The Exalted One is exalted as Head, and coming under that Headship in the power of the Holy Spirit is essential to the fulfilment of our vocation, the triumphant arrival at God's appointed end, the realisation of all that the cross of the Lord Jesus includes.

May the Lord make this something more than a re-statement of truth. May He bring home to our hearts in a new way and get us clearly into this position, that we should go down in prayer before Him and ask: 'Lord, what is your plan for my life, what is your way for me, what do you want where I am concerned?' That is what those of us who have been baptized meant in the thought of God about our baptism. We may not have seen, but that is what God meant, and He will bring us back again to it. The death relates to ourselves; the resurrection relates to Him. "Henceforth ... unto Him" (2 Cor. 5:15, KJV), then everything in relation to His heavenly Kingdom and under the government of His Spirit. The Lord make it so!

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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