

# ***Christ Our All***

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*by Theodore Austin-Sparks*

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## **Table of Contents:**

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## **Table of Contents:**

**Foreword**

**Chapter 1 - The Cross of Christ: The Basis of a New Creation**

**Chapter 2 - Christ in Heaven Our Sufficiency**

**Chapter 3 - The Anointing**

**Chapter 4 - An Open Heaven**

**Chapter 5 - A Heavenly Life**

**Chapter 6 - Fellowship with God**

**Chapter 7 - The Hidden Manna**

**Chapter 8 - "My Peace I Give Unto You"**

**Chapter 9 - The Meaning and Value of Sonship**

**Chapter 10 - The Secret Strength of Divine Purpose**

## Foreword

The following messages are a free translation of a series of addresses held at our Motherhouse in October 1935 by T. Austin-Sparks.

We are very thankful for the rich blessing, brought to wider circles of the Lord's people, through the ministry of our brother. Our great desire, in presenting these addresses in printed form, is that the Lord may place them into the hands of those whose heart is set upon Christ that He may become their All. We have sought to retain, as much as possible, the original form of the messages — spoken in English — which we ask our readers to bear in mind where certain ways of expression are used.

May this little volume contribute, according to the desire of the apostle, *“to present every man perfect in Christ.”*

Gümligen, Switzerland,

December 1935.

## Chapter 1 - The Cross of Christ: The Basis of a New Creation

“And He that sits on the throne said: Behold, I make all things new!” Rev. 21:5

..”.That He might create in Himself of the two one new man...” Eph. 2:15-16

“If any man is in Christ he is a new creation.” 2 Cor. 5:14-17

..”.His body shall not remain all night upon the tree... for he that is hanged is accursed of God; that thou defile not thy land...” Deut. 21:23

..”.Whom they slew, hanging Him on a tree...” Acts 10:39

“Christ... having become a curse for us...” Gal. 3:13

..”.The Lamb that has been slain from the foundation of the world.” Rev. 13:8

..”.The glory which I had with thee before the world was.” John 17:5

..”.By the blood of an eternal covenant.” Heb. 13:20-21

All these passages have a relationship with one another, and are linked with the word: “Behold, I make all things new.” We see in it God’s plan with three main phases.

The first phase is related to the foreknowledge of God. Some of the passages we have read refer to something which happened “*before the world was.*” Jesus said of Himself that He had a glory with the Father “*before the world was.*” The Lamb had been slain “*from the foundation of the world.*”

God saw, in His foreknowledge, the need of a redemptive work, and laid the ground of a new creation. He saw the end of the redemption in its consummation — fulfilled through the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ who was slain, according to God’s purpose, from the foundation of the world; that is, before the ground of the new creation was laid.

In Hebrews 13 we read of the blood of “*an eternal covenant.*” That does not refer to a “future” eternity. That word points to the past, a past as seen from our standpoint; because for God the past and the future are alike: an eternal present time. But the Word, being written for our sakes, and taking account of our limited realm, wants to show us that in the foreknowledge of God the blood of an eternal covenant was already set apart. Then this creation came into being. It appeared out of the chaotic state of a judged world, and “*it was very good.*” After that came the fall. Through sin the evil one got the upper hand and saw to it that the history of the world became one of darkness and human misery. Now the creation is waiting for the redemption — “*the unveiling of the sons of God.*”

This leads us to the second phase of God’s purpose, the Cross of the Son of Man. In Him appears, at the same time, the new creation. On the one hand the old creation was judged, and came definitely to an end in Him as our Representative. In the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, all have died. On the other hand He is the resurrection and the life, “*the firstborn from among the dead.*” But this new creation is not like the old one. The new heaven and the new earth are of a different order. We now live “*by faith and not by sight.*” It is a spiritual world, entirely new; new in an all-inclusive sense.

The third phase is presented to us in the book of the Revelation, chapter 21: "*Behold, I make all things new.*" That is the new creation in its consummation. It is a spiritual creation as the ultimate outcome of the Cross of Christ. This spiritual creation will take a form which is adequate to its nature: a new heaven and a new earth.

These three phases of the divine plan are very clear in God's Word. But let us now turn to the central thing, namely the fact that it is the Cross which is at the basis of the all things to become new.

The Cross has two sides. It represents the end of an old creation, and the coming in of a new one.

Shall we now see the point from where God takes up His new work? Well, there was a moment in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ when this whole creation was, so to speak, in ruin. Spiritually we meet that which is told us at the beginning of the book of Genesis concerning the state of the earth. We read: "*The earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.*" That was the result of a fall. It meant judgment. When we come to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and see again the darkness upon the earth which lasted until the ninth hour, and hear Him cry: "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*," we understand what He meant when He said: "*Now is the judgment of this world.*" In Him, the Son of Man, God has brought the creation in its fallen state, and the whole work of the devil under His judgment. God abandoned and rejected it in its Representative. That terrific judgment fell upon one person. One man became the representative of all.

Jesus Christ on the Cross represents the whole creation under the judgment of God. God was visiting in Him the sin of the whole world. The whole creation went down into death. God cut the very light of His countenance from His Son. All the sin of this creation, searched through the heart of one man. The answer to His cry: "*Why hast thou forsaken me*" would be in effect: "Because of the sin of the world which is upon You; because of the work of the devil, who has to be destroyed." The apostle Paul says: "*One died for all, therefore all died.*" We know that in His Cross the whole world is put away. "*The old things are passed away.*"

But we have to realize this in our consciousness; we must see it. The natural mind cannot know it. The wisdom of the natural is, according to James, inspired of the devil. We see a devilish wisdom at work today. Only if God is giving us light can we see the things in His light. Then we see what the natural man really is. We see the Cross as the revelation of God's wrath over our sinful nature. The Cross of Calvary is the judgment over this sinful world. And because we belong, by nature, to this world which God has abandoned, therefore the Cross of Jesus Christ has to be registered in our lives; that what we are by nature has to come under the judgment of the Cross. We have to repudiate ourselves continually that our life may not come under the wrath of God. We dare not serve God with that which He has rejected. God has rejected the wisdom of man. He will not have it in His service, neither will He have any other "abilities" from ourselves. God can only use that which comes straight out from the new creation.

So we have to be very careful. There is a constant need for heart-searching in this matter. How easily something of the natural man creeps in. Again and again we want to serve and do things — with our best intentions — where we can do nothing, where we

must do nothing, where God has to be doing all in us, where it has to be in the strength of a new life to bring in a new ministry. There is a need to keep very close to the Cross of Christ. The Holy Spirit must be allowed to keep this natural man on the Cross that all things may be truly “out of God,” and not from ourselves.

Is it not a terrible thing that we can come under judgment even in the work of God? It is impossible to live an acceptable life before God with resources which are under His curse, with that which we produce, in the strength of *our* ability. In the book of Deuteronomy we read that the body of him that is hanged upon the tree ‘*shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt surely bury him the same day; for he that is hanged is accursed of God.*’ In the letter to the Galatians Paul interprets this word in speaking of Christ, “*having become a curse for us.*” One hanging on a tree overnight would pollute the whole land. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Representative of the whole creation, would pollute the whole earth, if He remains all night on the cross! There can be no more terrible thought in the Word of God. How this unveils to us the awful condition of this creation which is abandoned of God. It is so cursed that everything of the old nature, without any reservation, is left, rejected and put away in Him who, as its Representative, has become a curse for all.

If ever we see the necessity of a new creation, the need of an absolute new creation, we see it here. *Everything* must become new. The Word of God says: “*Behold, I make all things new!*” God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Again we come to the book of Genesis. “*The earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.*” And God said, “*Raised from the dead through the glory of the Father!*” God raised His Son from the dead. He brought Him forth as “*the firstborn from the dead.*” It is a new creation which is rising. In Christ we too are a new creation. It is true, without a doubt: “*All things are new.*”

“*But all things are of God.*” All things are become new. Our wisdom is a new wisdom. Our strength is a new strength. Our heart is a new heart. Our capacities are new capacities. All things are become new. It is *Christ in us!*

I realize in a new way that we have to be very diligent to see to it that we do nothing out of our own strength, that God is doing all. Looking into the work of my own mind there are my own thoughts, there is the strength of my own desires, strong passions of heart and will. But I ask the Lord to keep me in dread of myself, for this whole creation, all of what I am in Adam, is cursed. It lies where God has abandoned it. He cannot use it. Everything now must be of God.

I do want to urge upon you to have more heart-searching in this matter. Oh, there is a wonderful new creation with divine resources! There are marvelous possibilities, because they are God’s possibilities for us. All things are possible from God’s side. Shall we not take the place where all things are possible? We can be there where all things are of God. HE is initiating things, HE is doing all. Let us reach out to come into our God-appointed place in Christ — the fullness of God in Him. Therefore we have to come to the Cross, and accept its implications from both sides. We must see that awful side of the Cross of Jesus Christ — the curse of the cross — that He was crucified for us, and we *in Him*. We dare not bring anything of that old creation into the new life, for it would continually come under God’s judgment. The day might come when all our work

would have to be burnt. There is a big difference between that which is done for the Lord, and that which is of the Lord *in us*. "*He that is hanged is accursed of God.*" With Christ we have hung upon the tree, and God has forsaken us in His Cross. But that is not the end of all, but the beginning of a far bigger thing, something altogether new. Let me say it again: we cannot come into the new thing unless the old things are passed away. "*Behold, I make all things new!*"

May the Lord bring us there where it can be said of us in truth: All things are new! And may He establish us in it moment by moment. May the Cross be registered in every realm of our lives, working in our spirit, soul and body, in mind, heart and will. May it operate in our words and works, that all may be governed by His Cross, and a clear way made for the glory of God, and the fullness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Chapter 2 - Christ in Heaven Our Sufficiency

Reading: Colossians 2

When waiting before the Lord concerning these days of conference, it was borne on my heart that He would have us be occupied with Christ in heaven as our Sufficiency.

Let us turn to some passages of Scripture:

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...”* Eph. 1:3-4

*..” They drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ.”* 1 Cor. 10:1-4

*“This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel... who received living oracles to give unto us.”* Acts 7:38

*..” Our sufficiency is from God...”* 2 Cor. 3:5

*“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves.”* 2 Cor. 4:7

All these passages have to do, in one way or another, with sufficiency. That sufficiency is bound up with our Lord Jesus Christ. Now what occupies us here is touching a question about which every Christian should be quite sure and clear as to its answer: What is the supreme purpose which governs the life of a child of God? It is very important that we should be able to answer that question. I believe the right answer is: the supreme purpose of the life of the child of God is — *to learn Christ*.

God has filled Christ with all His fullness. In Him dwell all the riches of knowledge and wisdom. And that fullness is for us. The apostle Paul makes this statement, saying, that we are *“blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”* Thus our business as believers is to learn Christ to come, in a living way, into the fullness of Jesus Christ. That governs everything. Every dealing of God with His child is to bring that one into a fuller knowledge of Christ. All the rest in our life will be but the outcome and the result of that knowledge.

I have heard many people say that the purpose of God, in having saved us, is that we should save others. But this is only a part of God’s purpose. There can be no real service for the Lord apart from a personal knowledge of the Lord. We can never lead anyone into a knowledge which is not ours, neither can we lead anyone further than we know Christ in a living way. So everything depends on the measure of our knowledge of Jesus Christ.

If we live as long as Methuselah we shall never exhaust the fullness of Jesus Christ. There is always more to discover in Him. I therefore believe that our occupation in eternity will be to know Christ more and more. Our life-purpose is to enter into the sufficiency of all the fullness of Jesus Christ for us. If that is perfectly clear the question will arise:

**How Can We Learn Christ?**

Before we answer this question let us first look at the background of that fullness and sufficiency of Christ. It may startle you if I say that this background is a WILDERNESS. We can only know the sufficiency of our Lord Jesus Christ if we are willing to go into the wilderness.

Now, the wilderness has always been the best place for spiritual education. You may think that there is not much to be learnt in a wilderness. Nevertheless it is so; it is the best place to learn heavenly things. It was so with Abraham; it was so in the case of Moses; it was true with Israel. The wilderness had also a definite place in the life of Paul. Whether we take it in a literal or a spiritual way, the fact is, that God's people were, again and again, sent into the wilderness. Many of us know what such a "wilderness" means.

When God puts His hand upon a people, He always cuts them off from everything which is not of Himself; that is, He cuts them off from the whole realm of their natural life, and puts them, so to speak, outside of the world of nature. We see this in the case of the people of Israel. Pharaoh was allowing them to go into the desert; he wanted them to serve God in a half-hearted way: partly in Egypt and partly in the land. But that could never serve God. God's irreducible minimum was: not a hoof was to be left behind. God's people should be absolutely separated from Egypt. Therefore the Red Sea came between His people and the Egyptians. God saw to it that they remained in the wilderness until they had learnt their lesson. God had some great lessons to teach them there. Israel's sojourn in the wilderness had to serve coming generations as an example. The dispensation of the church — yet far away in the future — was to derive its instruction from them. In the wilderness God laid down eternal principles. The things which happened to Israel "*were our examples.*"

God cuts His people off from the whole realm of nature. You know how little the natural man prevails in the wilderness. It doesn't matter how intellectual, how mighty the natural resources are. It is not of much use in a wilderness. You may be an excellent student, a splendid businessman or organizer, yet all this is not much good in a wilderness. For a man who is planted down alone in the middle of a wilderness, his own cleverness is not of much avail, his natural capacities will not bring him very far.

So you see what matters. When God gets us into His hand, He takes us right out of the realm of what we are by nature. That is the meaning of the wilderness. God's object is to make Christ everything. So long as we can do things, so long as we have resources in ourselves, we cannot know Jesus Christ. Christ will remain an unexplored realm for us.

In the first letter to the Corinthians we find some definite statements concerning Christ in the wilderness. "*They did all eat the same spiritual food, and drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ.*" Whenever Israel came into a new situation of need, the thing which God did for them to meet that need was to give them an illustration of Christ. If they needed food, heaven provided it. What they received was a type of Christ. So they learned to know Christ in the wilderness as their food and their drink. This is a great historic illustration for the church, *that Christ in heaven is her sufficiency.*

What was true of Israel historically was also true of Jesus Christ voluntarily. Christ accepted that position of dependence for Himself. He chose to live entirely on heavenly resources. Everything concerning Christ here on earth speaks of His poverty. He had none of the riches of this world. He did not enjoy the advantages this world could provide. He was born in a very poor home. Early in His life He had to work for His livelihood. His life was right to the end straitened on the natural side. But so He willed it to be. He chose to live on heavenly resources rather than on earthly means. He fulfilled His whole ministry as out from heavenly resources. We may see that more fully later.

The church, when wholly in the hands of the Lord, will be led by the same way, and brought into that dependence. All that which is of nature must cease, that she may learn that her whole life is bound up with Christ in heaven, and all her resources are in Him alone.

But it is just wonderful to live in the heavenlies! it is a realm of constant discoveries, of continuous wonder. Day by day we feel how impossible the things are as seen from the natural standpoint. We know in ourselves that we cannot meet situations and answer the need. Our nature is governed by this great, "I cannot." We see this in Paul's life. He says of the natural man that he "*cannot know the things of God.*" That is the reason why natural resources are of no avail in the realm of divine things. But to be brought into the realization of that fact is to be brought into a realm of wonderful experiences, a realm of constant discoveries of how rich and full Christ is for us. Only those who realize their own weakness and failure know what a wonderful strength and fullness there is in Christ. In the course of time we come up against an impossible situation. There is no strength in us to meet that need. We do not know how to get through this thing. If we are left to ourselves we shall fail. But now we are entering into a fresh experience. We are learning something we have never known before. We see that the Lord has brought us into such a situation that we may discover more of the resources of Christ. At the beginning we thought we were going to break down; but in going on, in spite of all appearances, we slowly learn the lessons of the wilderness, so that we get into a new inward position where we can meet greater demands.

Thus we learn by experience that the Lord is equal to every situation, that Christ has what we need. Instead of being discouraged, we carry about a spirit of victory, although we have not more strength in us than before. We are just as unable in ourselves as we have ever been. But we begin to discover how capable the Lord is, how great His fullness is in our emptiness. He is the Strength in our weakness, He is the Wisdom for our foolishness. Our resources are no longer earthly resources, they are heavenly resources in Christ.

This was Paul's experience when he was in prison. Imagine being in his place! Cut off from temporal blessings, his work in the churches apparently come to an end, his liberty taken from him, in evident need physically and temporally. The whole situation he was in was depressing. He was faced with an early execution. And then he begins to write: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.*" He is in the "wilderness," yet he is living on the basis of Christ. Therefore he is triumphant.

And because he has so learned Christ, he has been able to be a blessing to an untold number of believers right up to this day. When turning to his letters we receive ever fresh blessings from its pages. The riches of Jesus Christ are flowing to us in abundance through His servant Paul. Paul knew Christ. But there was a spiritual wilderness in the background of that life, that is, a realm where nature cannot help. Therefore he writes: "*We have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay....*" That is the wilderness of our own nature — vessels of fragile clay. "*Our outward man is perishing.*" Paul had learnt the All-sufficiency of Christ for himself in the wilderness of the natural man.

So you see, the supreme business of a believer is to learn Christ. That brings us into a position of spiritual power and fullness, which means to live a life of victory and fruitfulness.

There are many who will not have the wilderness. They work for the Lord in their own strength. Such people do not know the Lord Jesus. They will not learn Christ. But if we will give to the Lord His place in our life, it may be that He will bring us into a wilderness that He may reveal Himself to us in His fullness, that we may learn Christ and His sufficiency.

May the Lord use these messages in order to show us our poverty, and reveal to us His fullness.

## Chapter 3 - The Anointing

*“Now it came to pass... that, Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon Him.”*  
Luke 3:21-22

*..” Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you.”* Acts 1:6-8

*“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”* Acts 1:6-8

*“And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things ... The anointing which ye received of Him abides in you.”* 1 John 2:20, 27

The most important thing in the believer's life is to learn Christ. *“In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”* That fullness is for us, for: *“In Him we are made full.”* And because Christ, as our fullness, is in the glory, therefore Paul writes to the Ephesians: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”* That means we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in our Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenlies. That implies that our relationship with the Lord Jesus must be a heavenly relationship. Only as we come into a heavenly union with Christ can we partake of these heavenly blessings.

Now we have already seen that there has to be a wilderness first in our lives before we can experimentally know the all-sufficiency of Christ for us. Israel's life in the wilderness meant a complete separation from the old nature, and an utter dependence upon resources outside of this earth. The wilderness in itself provided nothing for them, and all their natural capacities were of no use in such a place. But these conditions were just given to make the wilderness a place of revelation where they had to learn Christ, in a special way, as their sufficiency. Christ is the living Bread which came down from heaven. He is the Water of Life. The *“spiritual rock that followed them”* was Christ.

Let us therefore emphasize again that *in order to know Jesus Christ in fullness we have to come to the place where the world and all its natural resources cannot help us, and have to be completely ruled out.*

We have pointed out that Jesus Christ Himself accepted that position - that He voluntarily chose to live on a faith-basis. He chose to depend entirely on His Father. He could do absolutely nothing without Him; He had nothing Himself but was drawing everything from the Father. That is the more negative side of our meditation. Now let us turn to the positive side.

What is the basis of a life lived in a heavenly union with Christ, where all the resources have to be of a heavenly nature? The answer is: That basis is the Holy Spirit.

When Israel was separated from Egypt, and brought out into the wilderness, God gave them the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night. That cloud is a type of the Holy Spirit. The forty years in the wilderness typify that Israel's life became entirely governed by the Holy Spirit. When we come to the Lord Jesus we see the reality of this, and how true it was in His case. When He stepped out into public life, God separated Him for His special ministry. He came under the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22). From that moment His whole life was governed by the Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:14).

If we want to live a heavenly life in the wilderness, the Holy Spirit is essential. He is given for that very purpose. Through the Holy Spirit the same resources are at our disposal upon which Christ, in the days of His flesh, had been living. It is very important to recognize the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ voluntarily accepted our position, and was fashioned like a man, taking the place of one who is dependent on God for everything. If we do that, we shall rejoice to live a life which is governed by the Holy Spirit, a life through which our Lord Jesus Christ shall be glorified, even as He, living in the Father, glorified the Father. This then is our relationship with Christ. The basis of a heavenly life is the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus lived His life in the Holy Spirit. By that Spirit He was doing His work. He moved continually, in all His ways, as governed by the Holy Spirit. He refused to move or act under the influence of man, or be pressed by circumstances. He only did that which the Holy Spirit witnessed in Him. The secret of His triumphant life was the government of the Holy Spirit.

Now what is true of the Lord Jesus has to be true for us. It is the same Spirit which is anointing us. We have come to see that this world is a wilderness. We are called to let go our natural resources, and to live a life entirely out from God, in direct communication with Him. In the things of God we cannot use natural resources. Neither the world nor we in ourselves can produce anything for God. But let us place the emphasis upon the positive side: the Spirit of Anointing makes everything possible. The Holy Spirit, the Anointing which we have received, brings us into oneness with Christ. Just as Christ was one with the Father by the Spirit, so we are made one with Christ by the same Spirit. This is a wonderful union! It means that the Lord Himself is doing the work in us in order to work it out *through* us.

What we want to say is, that God Himself will do His work. It cannot be done through our trying to do it. To ask Him to help us to do His work is a great mistake. If it is the Lord's work, then it is HE who is doing it. He never gives His own work into our hands. The Lord does not give His work to you or to me. We are but His employees, like the workman who uses his tools. A tool never thinks out what it should do. It simply yields to the hand of its master. He has the plan. He has the skill and the strength, and the tool is only expressing what is in the mind of the workman. The responsibility lies with HIM. The tool is only allowed to do what the master wants to do through his instrument. Imagine an instrument getting up in the morning determined to do this or that, hoping the master would help it. This is not the right attitude. Let us think of the tool which takes this attitude and says: "Now Master, you know what you will do. You have the plan. You know how you will work, and at what time you will do it. I am here at your disposal. I am willing to serve you in any way you please. I am altogether consecrated to you and your purpose. I look to you concerning the work which lies before us. You must be the wisdom, the strength and the power of endurance behind me. If I should become blunt you can sharpen me again. Everything depends upon you, but I am one with you."

This is a very simple illustration of the truth. That was exactly the relationship of the Lord Jesus with His Father. He said: "*My Father works even until now, and I work.*" He only worked because His Father worked. He also said: "*The works which the Father has given me... the same works I do.*" The link between Him and the Father was the Holy Spirit. He brought about that marvelous oneness. Now we are under the same

anointing. That anointing is the guarantee for meeting every need to which we are called, and to do it at the right time.

When we are under the anointing, which brings us into oneness with our Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenlies, there is no need to get into a state of anxiety concerning “our works.” The Holy Spirit will come in and show us where we have to act as under the Lord’s commission, and where we have to stand back and wait — in spite of apparent need and pressure which comes upon us — because the Lord’s time has not yet come to meet that need.

*“The anointing teaches you concerning all things.”* Has this not been true many a time in our lives? For instance, a difficult situation arises, a problem has to be solved, and we are asked to meet that need. Now we get worked up into a state of anxiety, but all our thinking and planning is getting us nowhere. We cannot see what we should do; we have no light. But when we have handed it over to the Lord, when we put our confidence in Him, trusting Christ to be our wisdom and strength, the light comes, and we are able to give the needed counsel, and touch the vital points as we, in ourselves, would never be able to do. It just comes by revelation. The experience is true: *“In that hour it shall be told you what to speak.”* The Holy Spirit is given us that we may, through Him, continually stand in unbroken and direct fellowship with our Lord in heaven. Immediately we begin to work at things with our mind, and count upon our resources, or look at circumstances, we take upon us a responsibility which is beyond us, and which we cannot meet. The result is that we become anxious, worried and fretful. We begin to ask other people to tell us what to do. We look round for some help from outside, and thus enter more and more into the realm of the natural world which, we know, cannot help us in heavenly things. But if we abide under the anointing, we have the certainty that all we have to do is but *a part of a completed work.*

How often attempts were made upon the life of the Lord Jesus to destroy it. His life was beset with danger. He had hardly stepped out into public ministry, and we see His murderers at work. We are told that such an attempt was made when He went into the synagogue of Nazareth. The people were offended by His words and led Him to the brow of the hill of their town to cast Him over. But He went right through their midst out of their hands, and their attempt failed. He could not be destroyed even one day before His time because of the anointing. God had ordered His life to the very “hour.” *“No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of myself.”* What is anointed and abiding under the anointing will complete the work. We too can be assured to complete the work to which God has called us in life, and for which He has appointed us in Christ. *“We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.”* What a mighty comfort to know that it is the anointing, which takes the full responsibility for the completion of our life! So we just have to abide under the anointing.

The book of the Acts is a wonderful demonstration of this very thing. Before the Lord left His disciples He gave them this commission: *“Go ye into all the world...”* But He added: *“Tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high.”* When the Spirit of Anointing came upon them on the day of Pentecost, they had no desire to hold a committee meeting and say: “Now we must organize our work. We must arrange to collect money, and make plans how to run this thing well. It will be necessary to think of

all the emergencies which may arise.” No, the apostles were delivered from all this. The anointing which they had received took charge of it all. They did not have to think it out. They went to fulfill their commission with great joy, and let the Holy Spirit see to all the emergencies. He took the full responsibility for them. All they had to do was just to yield in complete obedience to Him.

When the church came into being they did not have to find fresh members for the church. They did not come together to organize this or that, in order to build the church. The Holy Spirit took full charge. We read: “*The LORD added to them day by day those that were saved.*” But perhaps the other statement was even more important; the Holy Spirit did not allow just anyone to join them. We read: “*But of the rest durst no man join himself to them.*” It is sometimes easier to bring people into the assembly — outwardly — than to get them out again. But for that too the Holy Spirit took full responsibility. That is an important factor. It is a grand position to be in when, for all matters concerning the church and our calling, the Holy Spirit is taking the responsibility.

But let us not forget that such a position does provoke the enemy. Immediately after the anointing the Lord met the enemy in the wilderness. The adversary does not care much where the anointing is not working. But if you and I come under the anointing, if the Holy Spirit is making Christ in the glory the Christ which is “*the hope of glory*” in us, we shall become the object of the enemy’s hatred. If one can say of believers that they are under the Anointing, truly they shall be hated of the devil. He will do all that is in his power to destroy such instruments of God. But the anointing also secures the victory. The Holy Spirit gives us the victory.

But don’t forget that our natural strength and the power of the Holy Spirit can never go together. It is absolutely essential that the natural man is ruled out. Only when we know our own weakness shall we be strong. Think of the apostle Paul when he said: “*When I am weak then am I strong.*” So our natural wisdom and God’s wisdom cannot go together. Therefore the wilderness is needed, and we have to say “yes” to God’s dealings with us. We have to be willing to forsake our self-life and let go of everything in order to come to the fullness of Christ. The fullness of the Holy Spirit is the birthright of every child of God. He brings us into a heavenly union with our exalted Head. In Him the heavenly resources are available for us, because God has made our Lord Jesus Christ to be our fullness. Where the Anointing abides it will be true again and again that: “*God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.*”

“*Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever.*”

## Chapter 4 - An Open Heaven

*“And thou shalt make a veil... and the veil shall separate unto you between the holy place and the most holy.”* Ex. 26:31-36

*“And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom...”* Matt. 27:46-51

The object of our meditation is: Jesus Christ in heaven as our Sufficiency. We have already seen that our Lord Jesus’ resources came from His Father when He was here on this earth. He voluntarily lived in a state of absolute dependence on Him. He willed it to be so. He refused to have anything in Himself. Everything He needed He drew from heaven; He received it from above.

When we are in resurrection-union with Christ, the Holy Spirit brings us into oneness with Him who is in heaven for us. That means: all the resources upon which the Lord Jesus lived are at our disposal. These resources were secret resources, that is, they were unknown to the world. The people around Him were absolutely in the dark as to the source of His power. There was a secret relationship between Him and His Father which impressed them. They saw that there was something in the background of His life, a mysterious power and knowledge, which was not ordinary to man. He had a whole set of resources at His command which no one possessed. He had a knowledge which was far beyond man’s understanding. And because He lived a secret life, a life in His Father, His resources were mysterious and wonderful to men.

If we live in heavenly union with Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, the same resources are at our disposal. Let us remind ourselves of the Word which is at the basis of our meditation: *“The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.”* That means that all the resources which are in Christ are available for us. But we have to learn to live in such close fellowship with Him as He lived with His Father in the days of His flesh.

Now let us look at some of these secret resources and turn to Hebrews 9:3-4: *“And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies.”* We have here the tabernacle as it was in the earth, with its holy place and its most holy. The holy place represented the earth. There we have the candlestick, the altar of incense, and the table of showbread, pointing — in type — to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now Jesus Christ has gone through the veil into the place of future realities, where everything is Christ, Christ All and in all. Heaven is open since Christ rent the veil. For the natural man heaven is closed. This includes not only the heaven we may go to one day, but it represents a sphere, the present realm of God’s activity, which we can share in union with Him.

We too, have an open heaven. Paul says: *“Our citizenship is in heaven!”* If our walk on this earth is to be a heavenly one, we must have an open heaven, for we are utterly dependent upon heaven for spiritual blessing. The door of heaven is closed to the natural man. Even a man like Nicodemus cannot see it, and even less enter it.

Let us repeat that the “holy place” of the tabernacle represents the earth, and the “most holy place” heaven. In the one place we have the types of heavenly things. In the other

was God Himself. Between the two was the veil. Death would meet anyone who would go through that veil into the most holy place, except by God's special command.

The letter to the Hebrews tells us further that that veil was a type of Christ's flesh. There are two sides in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ: an earthly side (towards the earth) and a heavenly one (towards God). Between heaven and earth was the veil, and Christ's flesh was that veil. When Jesus Christ died on the cross the veil in the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. Now the types gave place to the reality. What was but suggestive, pointing to God, passed away, and man was allowed to draw near to God. The flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ is speaking of human limitation which formed a barrier between the realities of God and man. If we look into the holy place of the tabernacle we have features and illustrations of heavenly things because of man's limitation.

The whole of the Old Testament is giving us these object lessons, because man by nature cannot enter into the realities of divine things. God could speak to man about heavenly things only by way of earthly representations. He had to teach man like one teaches a child, in giving him these pictures and parables of divine things. That is the meaning of the "holy place." No one was allowed to enter through the veil, which separated the holy place from the most holy, and which were types of earth and heaven.

Now Israel was to give by its life an illustration, a pattern of the things of God. What happened to Israel is a parable for us. Therefore Israel's history is so significant for us who, in the light of the New Testament, are now enabled to see in these Old Testament types as divine realities.

Once a year, on the day of the atonement, the veil was lifted. After many preparations the high priest was allowed to enter into the "most holy place." But it was only once a year and then it was closed again. But the day of atonement spoke of something deeper in the intentions of God. That day was pointing to the fact that, according to God's will, the veil was not to remain forever, but there would be an atonement through which heaven was to be kept open for ever.

When Christ died on the cross the veil was rent. What God had planned from before times eternal, was accomplished in Him. Now the way to God is open for ever! In Christ the rent veil opened the way. He had come in the flesh, as the Son of God, to do that work which no one could do. In Christ risen there is no veil anymore. As Son of Man He accepted our human limitation. As Son of Man He was the representative MAN. But as Son of God He was linked with heaven. In His person He was the veil of the tabernacle. He stood between heaven and earth. He stood between man's limitation and God's fullness, between the types and the realities. When He lived among men, He spoke in parables of heavenly things, because of the limitations of man who was unable to apprehend them. So He brought heavenly things in earthly forms. He said: *"If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?"* What He meant was: "If I have put heavenly things in the form of earthly parables and types, and you have not understood, how will you understand if I speak with you in a heavenly language!"

Now all these limitations are passed away. Christ is in truth "*the way*." He has entered, through the veil of His flesh, the innermost sanctuary, the most holy place, and opened the way. It is Christ crucified who is the way for us into the immediate presence of God.

And when He says: "I am *the truth*," it means: all that you see are but types and symbols serving as pictures. They are not the heavenly things in themselves. HE is the reality of all these things. In HIM we have the reality. The priests were occupied in the tabernacle, year in year out, but their works were "dead" works which could never lead to a living union with God. Now Christ said: "I am *the life*." Only in Christ there is life. The blood of goats and bulls and the life in that blood was only a reminder, a type. No one but Christ can give life. HE is the living reality.

Now we see heaven and earth united in Christ risen and ascended. He is the mediator. He is the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream, and upon which the angels of God were ascending and descending. The Lord referred to that when speaking to Nathanael, saying: "*Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man*." What was but a type at Bethel has become a living reality in Christ. He is uniting heaven and earth. In Him — in the two sides of His nature — God and man are brought together, heaven and earth are united. He is *the way*, the only way of communication for heaven and earth. Union with Christ means to live under an open heaven, in the presence of God, and in all the reality of the new life.

The Holy Spirit is given us on that ground. He came upon the Lord Jesus after His baptism in the Jordan. The heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. Now Christ risen means an open heaven. The Spirit of the Anointing comes upon us because the crucified One is risen. He comes to us out of an open heaven which the Son of God has opened for us.

But what was the value of the anointing? It is to bring us unto a heavenly union with God. The Lord Jesus said: "*When he, the Spirit... is come, he shall guide you into all the truth*." And John confirms this in saying: "*The anointing which ye received... teaches you concerning all things*." That is represented by the angels ascending and descending. The Holy Spirit is communicating with us, but Christ is the ladder, reaching from earth to heaven. Where is that ladder? It is not in the world. The ladder is set up in our hearts. It is Christ in our hearts. There is an open way from heaven in our hearts, Christ Himself, leading us into the very presence of God. The Holy Spirit moves in relation to Christ to bring us into communion with Christ, just as Christ is in communion with His Father.

The all-sufficiency of Christ is secured for us on that basis. We are in the heavenlies, because Christ is in us. If joined to His person the limitations are gone. There is a direct and immediate communion with God, and the Holy Spirit can reveal to us heavenly things.

Thus we understand what it means to receive everything directly from God in Christ. Christ in us means an inward knowledge of God, a heart-relationship with Him. It is an inward life from God, an inward power of God. But that is a mystery which the world does not and cannot know. It cannot understand that our Lord Jesus was willing to accept exactly the same basis of life with its limitation in which we live, although without sin. Yet, in fellowship with His Father, He continually broke through these limitations,

and overcame them in drawing all His provision, all the fullness from His Father alone. His sufficiency was in His Father.

So we are called to live, by the Spirit, a life triumphant over all our weaknesses, a life where Christ is everything, and where His victory is our victory. The work of the Cross is finished. The veil is rent. The way is open.

Thus Christ risen in heaven means for us an open heaven where everything is possible for us in Christ, that we may glorify Him. All things are given us in Him. And it is the anointing which teaches us all things.

## Chapter 5 - A Heavenly Life

*"As the Father has life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son to have life in Himself."*  
John 5:26

*"In Him was life."* John 1:4

*"I live because of the Father; so he that eats Me... shall live because of Me."* John 6:57

*"Thou gavest Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given Him, He should give eternal life."* John 17:2

*"And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."* 1 John 5:11

*"I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore."* Rev. 1:17-18

In the previous chapter we dealt with the first resource we have in our Lord Jesus Christ, and we saw that it is an open heaven. Now we come to the second resource: the possession of a heavenly Life.

In the first portion of Scripture we have read, the statement is made that the Father has given to the Son to have Life in Himself, *"in Him was Life."* The second passage in John 1:4 shows us the outworking of that Life. *"In Him was Life; and the Life was the light of men."* The third passage brings before us the relationship of that life to the Father. The Lord Jesus said: *"I live because of the Father."* This means that His life was based upon a special relationship He had with the Father. The last portion in John 17:2 shows us that He has authority to give Life. *"Thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given him, he should give eternal Life."*

Now the giving forth of that Life and the outworking of it in others is shown us in 1 John 5:11-12, where we read: *"And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal Life, and this Life is in His Son. He that has the Son has the Life."* Finally, Revelation 1 brings us to the place where that Life is challenged and tested as to its reality. The Lord Jesus said: *"I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."* In the Cross of the Lord Jesus that Life was challenged. Hell had risen to quench that Life. There was a terrific conflict with the forces of death. But the Life in Him overcame death, because it was an indestructible Life. Death had no power over that Life. Although He went down into the realm of death, He overcame death, for *"it was impossible that he should be holden of it."* He has the keys of death and of Hades. Keys are the symbol of authority. Now the Lord Jesus is in possession of them. That authority is based upon eternal Life which, through Him, has conquered death.

We will now look at the meaning of each of these verses, and consider them a little more closely.

Let us first note that the Life in our Lord Jesus Christ was a distinguishing factor. It made Christ unique among men. He was different from all the rest of God's creation. It was a life peculiar to Christ. In this sense it was possible to say of Him what could not be said of any other being of the creation: that *"in Him was Life."* The Lord knew that

there was a great difference between Him and others. Men were conscious that there was something in Him which was altogether different to them, and which they could not explain. That difference had nothing to do with education or social position, because it did not belong to the natural realm. It was of the spiritual realm, and could only be attributed to the Life which was in Him. That divine Life energized His mind so that it was not only superior to others, but different in its kind, although He always was a match to others intellectually. The secret was *spiritual vision*. The greatest religious authorities in Jerusalem tried to catch Him to lead Him into a trap. But He always escaped them, because His mind was energized by the divine Life ministered to Him by the divine Spirit. How often His adversaries stood before Him dumbfounded! How often they wondered at His wisdom saying: "*How knows this man letters, having never learned.*"

He was superior with regard to both mind and heart. He was energized by that divine Life in His sympathy and compassion which were greater than those of any man. His love was a different love. He suffered much at the hands of men, but He never lost His compassion. Even though He knew that Jerusalem was going to crucify Him, He wept over the city saying: "*Jerusalem, Jerusalem...*" His heart was moved with compassion and longsuffering towards His own. Did they themselves not testify of Him: "*He loved His own that were in the world and He loved them unto the end.*" Did they deserve such love? One of them denied Him. Yet He never lost His compassion for them or for Peter. His heart and His sympathies were maintained on the high level of His Father's love.

As to His will, His actions were energized by this Life from above, and as to His confidence He held on through every trial. He never doubted His Father's faithfulness.

It would take hours to follow up the outworkings in the unique life and nature of our Lord Jesus. During forty days after His resurrection, He sought to establish His disciples in showing Himself alive by many infallible proofs, eating and drinking with them. But the fiftieth day was the greatest day going beyond facts, when He made Himself an inward reality to them. When the 50th day came, "*when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled,*" the risen Lord came in order to dwell in the hearts of His disciples to be their Life, their power; the new creation of God. Upon the basis of Christ in them they were constituted His witnesses.

Ministry in the Spirit is a testimony of Life. If our ministry is not a testimony, it is not a true ministry. The heart of ministry is Christ in us, an expression of His resurrection. We have to reveal Christ as the Life, for in Him was Life. When we thus minister Christ, He will become manifest through us as light and liberty. The Lord said: "*Ye shall know the truth.*" That is light. "*And the truth shall make you free.*" That is liberty. Ministry is not a matter of words, but through words an impartation of Christ. It is not information about Christ, or beautiful addresses. Ministry is a showing forth of the Lord Jesus, a manifestation of Christ through us, as the risen Lord.

That is the ministry of the church. The assembly of the Lord is called to minister Life, and livingly testify to that Life in them. When we gather together in the Name of the Lord it ought to mean Life for us. Where the assembling of the Lord's people is a coming together in His Life, it always means a fresh energizing of His Life in them, a renewing of strength. Our mind is quickened, the clouds are lifted, even the body comes into the

good of the fullness of that Life. Perhaps some of the Lord's people come together at the end of a day, physically tired, worn out or discouraged. If their coming together is in the Spirit of Life which is in Christ Jesus, even their bodies will be quickened. They will be renewed physically, mentally and spiritually, so that they can go away from the gathering refreshed and full of joy, because they have met together in Life. That is altogether different from just sitting in a meeting and listening to a message. So often the ministry of the Word is left to the preacher, and the people are waiting to get something from him, hoping it may be sufficiently interesting to keep them awake. No one is contributing anything. There is no laying hold of Christ's Life unitedly. It is just the same old business as ever, beginning with the hope of getting somewhere, and ever ending in disappointment.

Now, the Lord knew that the enemy would seek to hide the fact of His resurrection. He knew that the supreme attack would rage around the assurance of His being alive among His own. Therefore He tarried so long with them to establish in them the testimony of His resurrection to make them His witnesses. But the means and methods of the enemy are innumerable. One of his wiles is two-sided. Either he succeeds to surround you with an atmosphere of spiritual death, where everything seems to be utterly dead and faith is tried to become empty and unreal, or he brings in a false life. He uses Scripture and seeks to stir up the emotions in a highly strung atmosphere where a great psychical force is at work to produce miracles similar to those of the Spirit; however, they are but lies and signs of deception.

The only way of knowing whether a thing is of God or not, is to ask ourselves: *does this minister Christ to us?* What matters is not to stir up the emotions, but to see to it that there is an increase of Christ. It is not to hold on to an experience, but to have wrought into us an inward knowledge of Christ. The test of all is whether Christ is ministered to us or not. How near is spiritual death! There is a constant conflict going on around us against the risen Life of the Lord. It is spiritual death against spiritual life. Death is the most persistent, the last of all our enemies, "*The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.*"

We have to maintain our faith in the fact that Jesus Christ is risen, that in Him we have Life, a new Life, the very Life of God, eternal Life.

Then there is the cooperation of faith. We have to make room for that Life in us. There is nothing more fatal than a passive attitude, a state of introspection. Life is active. Wherever we touch faith, there will and must be, active love. Faith is always active, for love cannot be merely passive. It may not always be outward activity. Sometimes that activity may just be an attitude of spirit, a waiting state, which is holding on tenaciously, believing that God's triumph is sure, that His faithfulness cannot fail.

Our life is not something merely abstract. It is the Life which is in Christ, a Life in fellowship with Him. And because we are in touch with the living person of Christ, the same resources of the invisible world are available for us upon which He was drawing, "*In Him was Life.*" Therefore we are full of thanks and unspeakable joy that "*God gave unto us eternal Life, and that this Life is in His Son.*"

May the Lord Himself teach us the meaning and value of His resurrection Life as the secret spring of an ever-flowing resource of our life.

## Chapter 6 - Fellowship with God

*“The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father doing ... For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that himself doeth... I can of myself do nothing... because I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.”* John 5:19-20, 30

*“When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak.”* John 16:13

*“The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.”* Rom. 8:2

*“...He also called God his own Father, making Himself equal with God... For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He will.”* John 5:18, 21

May I, first of all, ask you to carefully read and note these passages of Scripture. You will see that there is a wonderful correspondence between the Father and the Son, and the Son and the Father. That correspondence finds its expression in the little phrase “even so.”

What is remarkable in a peculiar way is the fact that the Lord Jesus puts the emphasis upon this: that He can do nothing of Himself. If we allow the full weight of that statement to come to our hearts, we shall see afresh what has occupied us at the beginning of our considerations, that the Lord Jesus voluntarily accepted a position of absolute dependence on His Father. He accepted a position of utter self-emptying. The springs of His resources were not in Him, but in His Father. *“The Son can do nothing of Himself.”* In His own person there was no resource to do things. In effect He was saying: “The source of everything is in the Father. I have to draw everything from the Father. Without Him I can do absolutely nothing.” That is something tremendous for the Son to say. It makes this secret fellowship and communion with the Father tremendously vital! But the very need of this complete fellowship with the Father was one of His secret resources.

Now, these are not only facts, but we also see a great difference between Him and other men. The natural man acts out from himself. The hallmark of the natural man is self-sufficiency. He always finds the springs of his resources in himself. We see that in Adam. At the beginning up to a certain point his resources were in God. He drew his instruction and wisdom from God. Everything was from God. By the way of obedience to God he was in fellowship with Him. But then came the moment when he began to act out from himself. By a subtle insinuation of the devil he began to reason out things for himself, until he became deceived by his own will, and mistrust against God crept into his mind. He took things out of God’s hands into his own hands. He ceased to draw his resources from God and thought he could have them in himself. That is the attitude of the natural man in Adam up to this day.

The natural man acts according to his own natural wisdom. He seeks to reason out a situation, weighing up things for and against it, and proceeding according to what he

thinks to be “common sense.” He directs his conduct by his own natural wisdom and reason. For some people reason is the strongest part of themselves. The source of things for them is in their own reason, and only what they think and mean to understand has any value for them. All the rest does not count. With others feelings are the strongest factor. According to what they feel they act.

But notice, as the natural man develops in history, the end of this dispensation will produce a natural man (humanity in its fallen state) developed to the utmost. There will be dictators, supermen, acting from themselves. They will be a law to themselves, without consulting others. What they feel, desire and reason out must be done. That state of things will lead up to Antichrist. He will be a self-contained man and represent the sum total of all that is natural — reason, desire, will. He will not hold God in reverence, but will be bigger than God. In him the human race will be represented in its fully developed fallen nature, turning that whole race against God.

What is true of Antichrist is true, in part, of every member of the human race. The natural man moves out from himself, but the result is always death. If we project our own will, our own desires, our own reason into things, however alive they may appear, the result will be death. Only that which comes out from God is Life. In connection with this the meaning of the word of the Lord Jesus is of primary importance: “The Son can do nothing of Himself.” If others believe they can, the Son cannot. Here is the tremendous difference between the Lord Jesus and ourselves. He can only move as from the Father. He can only go if the Father leads Him.

Now, the occasion of these words was the healing of the impotent man. The background of this incident gives much light about its inner meaning. Here is a man, impotent for years. He had tried for many years to get into the pool to find healing. But it was in vain. He was utterly helpless. He knew that his help depended on another man. How pathetic he is: “*I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool!*” His only hope was in another man. And having “no man,” one day Jesus comes this way and asks him to rise. The impotent man did not argue about this command and say: “I have tried it a thousand times, but I could not. I have no strength in myself to do it.” He put his faith in Christ. What he could not do in himself he did in the strength of another — Christ. Forsaking his own self he put on Christ. And he found that his salvation was in that Other Man. So, trusting Him he rose up. *Christ had become his strength.* That is Life.

Now that incident throws much light upon the whole chapter. The Jews objected against this, because they were governed by outward laws. Their demand was the fulfillment of the letter, the result of which was rather death than Life. “*For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*” The Jews would sooner leave the man in helplessness until his death, than have the work of Christ instead of the law. Christ was governed by an inward law which was the law of Life, and therefore brought Life. He said: “*My Father works, and I work... for what things soever He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner.*” Here is a wonderful correspondence between the Father and the Son, an inward law, a union in life with God, out of which are flowing the works of God, and the manifestations of Life.

What was the law? The law of the Jews consisted in “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not.” However the Jewish law was against the healing on a Sabbath day, the Father was not against it. It was the will of the Father, and the Lord Jesus was, in a mysterious way, recognizing that the Father was working, that the Father did it, therefore He did it. It was the law of an inward communication and fellowship with the Father which moved the Lord Jesus to take action. He was not governed by the natural mind, nor by the letter of the law; He did not try to reason out what might be the will of the Father. It was the law of the Spirit of life in Him which disclosed to Him the Father’s will, which gave to Him that inward assurance of His acts and which resulted from an inward hearing and seeing. He could say concerning His Father: “*The Father that sent me, He has borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.*” There is a mystery in that relationship between the Father and the Son. The secret source of the power of the Son in that relationship is because it was a relationship of *Life by the Spirit*.

Now the same relationship holds good for us. In the letter to the Romans the apostle Paul says: “*The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.*” Free from the law of sin. Free from the law of death. It is the freedom of a life in God through Christ.

May I ask you to just stop a moment. Have you really seen this? Has it become an inward reality to you? Do you really see that our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ is exactly on the same basis as His relationship was with His Father here on earth? It is the relationship of a life in the Spirit. Everything hangs upon that. It brings us into a new world. It marks the difference between an outward acceptance of Christian truths and its doctrine, and that which is Life revealed and wrought out by the Spirit. Our relationship with Christ is based upon the Spirit of Life working in us.

Now let us just say a few things as to the outworking of that relationship. It is a relationship by Life and its testimony is Life. Notice how true it was in the case of the Lord Jesus. It is significant how often He used the expression “My hour” in His life. It clearly shows us how much His whole life was governed by His Father. He was led in His actions and movements by God’s timing. Sometimes it was only a matter of hours or minutes. But He knew no unfulfilled moments in His life. Yet He was never in a hurry. Everything in His life was timed in a wonderful way. Any time would not do for Him, neither all times. To try and accomplish things out of God’s timing would mean death. When, at Cana, His mother came to persuade Him to meet the need which had arisen, He only took action when “His hour” had come, perhaps only a few minutes later. Again when His disciples sent for Him to come to the help of Lazarus who was dangerously sick, or when His brethren asked Him whether He was going up to Jerusalem to the feast with them. He waited for the right time, for His Father’s commandment. In all these cases we see the same restraint in Him. He was not following His own reasonings, but waited for the time the Father had appointed. It was the same with the words He spoke. Every word was from the Father and not from Himself. Timing, actions, words; *everything* was governed by the Father. “*My Father works — and I work.*”

But how did He know the Father’s will? It was not by the hearing of the natural ear, as if a voice had continually come to Him to direct Him. Christ knew the Father’s will by the Spirit of Life within. It was the fellowship of the one life in Him which brought Him that inward knowledge of God’s will and God’s works. Divine Life is not just a gift, a deposit,

something to be stored away in us. This Life is a working power in us. It is a divine direction given by the Spirit of Life within. God rules and commands by those means. He reveals His will to us by the Spirit of Life in us.

The Lord Jesus knew the Father's will by the quickening Spirit within. It is just as He said: "*The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.*" The Lord Jesus was not referring here to the physically dead, but to the spiritually dead; neither was He referring to an audible voice, but to the quickening Spirit within by which the voice of the Son of God is heard. "*The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life.*" It is the power of God working within. God speaks to our hearts. We have to learn to understand God's speaking in us right from the beginning at our new birth. There is a language of the Spirit, and we have to give heed to that quickening movement of the Spirit of Life in us. The voice of the Son of God is heard by the quickening Spirit within. It was so with the Lord. He had that quickening by the Spirit of God in Himself. What is true in His case has to be true for us. We have to be governed in the same way. "*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*" Sonship is by reason of our relationship with Him. The assurance of that sonship comes by the Spirit bearing witness within our spirit, saying, "You are a child of God." It is the witness of Life in us. We know in our spirit that we are children of God. We know it in spite of our sinfulness, our faults, our shortcomings. We are governed by the Spirit of Life which is proceeding from Him.

Now, gathering up all we have said, we see that this relationship, this fellowship with Christ, is available for us on resurrection ground. Christ has brought us into this union with Him in His Life. This demands three definite steps which are of primary importance:

1. We definitely have to recognize that this relationship with the Lord has to be in the Spirit of Life, that this is a *fact*, that it is true. We have honestly and most definitely to recognize that this relationship is that "Christ in us" is a *fact*, and that everything has to be governed by the Spirit of Life.
2. There must be perfect *obedience* to the Spirit's law of Life in us. Obedience was the law of Christ's life. He was never influenced by men or circumstances. He did not allow men to dictate His course because they said, "Do this or that; others do it also." This was no reason for Him why He should do something. He never put His decisions before men, for He knew in His own heart what the Father wanted. He worked with God in all things, not according to outward appearances, or what He heard from others, but according to the Spirit of Life in Him. He lived in absolute dependence on the Father, and complete obedience to all His will.
3. A walk in the Spirit is essential. We must not live in the flesh. To live in the flesh means to do things out from ourselves, to do our own will. But to walk in the Spirit is to do all things as out from God, as governed by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, let us not forget that this Life in the Spirit is a progressive, growing one. We do not know it all at the beginning. We have to learn, and in learning we often make mistakes. But as we are faithful and obedient to the Lord we shall be led step by step, and learn how to walk in the Spirit. We have to learn by experience. But the more we get to know the Lord Jesus, the more we enter into the fact of a complete salvation of

the fullness of glory in Him for us, the more that Life will grow in us, and we shall walk in the light, and therefore in the liberty of the sons of God.

That walk in the Spirit can be a very wonderful thing in the background of our lives, as we increasingly know the Spirit of Life in us — that secret relationship and fellowship with Christ in Life.

## Chapter 7 - The Hidden Manna

*“The bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life unto the world... I am come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me... For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholds the Son, and believes on Him, should have eternal life... My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.”* John 6:28-34, 38, 40, 53-58

*“If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself.”* John 7:17

*“My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish His work.”* John 4:31-34

In that statement of our Lord Jesus there are three things implied:

Firstly: the Lord Jesus has a secret source of strength. *“I have meat to eat that ye know not.”*

Secondly: There is a link between the will of God and LIFE. *“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.”* We remember that at this time the Lord Jesus was hungry and very faint. He sat down at the well weary from His journey. When the disciples came back from the town where they had bought food, they found Him remarkably revived. They thought that somebody had brought Him some food. But the Lord explained to them that the renewal of His life had come from doing His Father’s will. That shows a close connection between the doing of the will of God and “Life.”

Thirdly: The link between this is a *divine purpose* and the fulfillment of it. *“My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish His work.”* The Father’s will represented a divine purpose, and the Lord Jesus says that He was linked with that purpose. To accomplish that divine purpose was a greater satisfaction to Him than earthly things. We can say that He found His Life in doing the will of God.

Therefore, an important factor for us is that obedience is the way to God’s fullness. It was so in the case of the Lord Jesus. When He said: *“For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholds the Son, and believeth on Him, should have eternal life,”* it clearly shows that union with Christ, according to God’s will, means Life for us. Thus God’s will is in vital relationship and oneness with the Son.

Now, food is taken for the maintenance of our life. It satisfies our need, and serves for our development and growth. But all this is related to the will of God. The doing of the will of God is like taking food in order to live. When we do the will of God we are taking what maintains our Life. Our need is satisfied. The spiritual growth is maintained. The Lord Jesus said of Himself: *“I live because of the Father,”* and *“he that eats me shall live because of Me.”* The Lord Jesus lived by reason of His union with the Father. And we live by reason of our union with the Son.

What is essential in that union is *obedience*. Satan was out to destroy the life of the Lord — the last Adam — by the same way he had succeeded to destroy the first Adam: in getting him to disobey God. But the Lord Jesus met the devil by appealing to the

Word of God. Three times He said to him: "*It is written.*" This maintained His life, and overcame the prince of darkness and death.

Obedience towards the revealed will of God means deliverance from death. That is what we mean by the maintenance of our life. This attitude was true of the Son of God throughout His life. Being obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, He overcame death. Therefore He is alive for evermore. So everything is bound up with obedience in the matter of life. Immediately we withhold obedience to God, we arrest the Life of the Lord in us, and make it impossible to go on. Obedience is Life.

This spiritual meat is not only maintaining our Life, it also increases our Life. It is leading us into the fullness of Christ. We grow by taking that meat, and Life increases by obedience. In Philippians 2 we are told that the Lord Jesus was obedient to the Father to the uttermost, "*wherefore also God highly exalted Him and gave unto him the name which is above every name.*" That is fullness resultant from obedience. Every fresh act of obedience leads us into a greater fullness in Christ, into spiritual enlargement. But disobedience brings limitation and holds up the flow of Life.

This then, is the meaning of spiritual food: the doing of His will, being obedient in all things. This spiritual feeding is related to our union with Christ in His resurrection. It is a living upon that which Christ is in death and resurrection. In the background of John chapter 6 we have the Passover. In connection with what that means spiritually, the Lord Jesus fed a great multitude. The Jews were about to eat the Passover lamb. But before that took place we have here a hungry multitude, and He — God's Lamb — feeds them with bread saying: "*I am the bread of life.*" He links that with the Passover, the Cross, the Lamb slain, saying in effect: "I am yours. In my death and resurrection, that is, in ME you have Life." It is Christ imparted to us.

Now, there is a remarkable clause in John 6:27, where the Lord says: "*Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him the Father has sealed.*" Those to whom the Lord addressed this word knew quite well what He meant. They knew that they were not allowed to take any lamb for the Passover. It had to be one without blemish. Then every lamb had to be brought to the temple to be examined by the priests as to its absolute perfection. And when it was according to the demanded requirements the priests put the temple-seal upon it and it was slain. Everybody knew what that seal meant. So the Lord Jesus took that familiar custom, relating it to Himself saying: "*Him has the Father sealed.*" Christ was going to give Himself to His people as one whom the Father had declared absolutely perfect. He was giving Himself to be their food that they might live through Him and walk in obedience to Him as He had been obedient to His Father.

We too are "sealed" by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians that they are "*sealed with the Spirit of promise.*" God knows them that are His. We are His possession. We receive the Father's seal as an earnest that He has chosen us, that we are accepted in the Beloved One, that He has not rejected us. We are accepted in Christ as perfect. That complete fellowship with Christ implies nothing less than an utter abandonment to Him, a putting aside of all which is personal, all self-will, so that we can say in truth: "*I am crucified with Christ. Christ lives in me.*"

Meat and drink are a spiritual thing. It means abiding *"in Christ"* and is related to the doing of the Father's will in every part of our life. But the question which arises here is: Do we really want to live? Remember, we only "live" in truth, if we accomplish the will of our Lord, if we allow the Lord Jesus to be our Life, being perfectly obedient to Him. Our will is a corrupted will. Personal desires are always corrupted. We are flesh. But there has to be none of that "in Christ." Sin has been dealt with and judged in the Cross. There it was made manifest that Christ's perfect humanity was maintained and free from any corruption right to the end. Now that perfect Lamb of God is given for us. We are allowed to receive Him, to abide in Him. He who wholly accomplished the will of God will abide in us. Thereby we grow. To eat His flesh and drink His blood means growing up into Him so that His power in us becomes manifest. He will, and must, increase until we are transformed into His likeness, until His image is seen in us.

Now, what is God's purpose for us? The Lord Jesus said that the will of the Father was *"to accomplish His work."* What was that work? Let us look once more at chapter 4 and the need of that woman of Samaria. She did not know the true life. When she came to the well she was in great need. Brought into a conversation with the Lord concerning life, she eventually saw that Christ was the Life. *"He that believes on Me has eternal life."* And the woman believed. When the disciples came back from the town they found the Lord Jesus wonderfully renewed. He was fully satisfied, because He had accomplished the will of the Father. What was that will? It was to give Life to all whom the Father had given Him.

God's work is to lead poor souls to know the Life in Christ. When we fulfil our ministry in being channels of Life to others, we shall soon discover that this is more satisfying than anything else. If you have led a soul to Christ you know what satisfaction means. To carry the divine Life to needy souls fills the heart with such joy and satisfaction, that earthly desires fade away. Let us seek to lead poor sinners to Christ, for when we are in that work we shall know what true Life is, a life of perfect obedience to God, devoted to the Father's will. This was the law of Life of the Lord Jesus. This is the hidden Manna, the secret sustenance of our life. Those who do not know the Lord know nothing of this. But he who lives out of Christ knows that meat. He knows that to do the will of God is Life. The more we are obedient to that divine will, the more the rivers of His Life will flow in us. Let us seek that kind of meat which the world does not know, but of which the Lord said: *"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish his work."*

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them"* (Eph. 2:10)

## Chapter 8 - "My Peace I Give Unto You"

*"Ye shall find rest unto your souls."* Matt. 11:29-30

*"The truth shall make you free... If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."* John 8:32, 36

*"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you."* John 14:27

*"These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye may have peace..."* John 16:33

*"Peace be unto you."* John 20:19, 21, 26

These passages give us the key to another feature of the resources of Jesus Christ, namely, a secret rest and liberty. The life of our Lord Jesus was marked by a peacefulness of spirit and a real rest of heart. There is no doubt about that, although there was a great deal in His life to make it otherwise. Often He was in storms, but very rarely the storms were in Him. The demands upon Him were great. There was much to be done. But He was never overwhelmed by it, never distressed. He went through it all in peace and rest of heart. Someone remarked quite rightly that it is never recorded in Scripture that the Lord Jesus ever ran. He was never caught by shortness of time. His whole life was marked by rest and peace within.

If we study this matter we see that the Lord Jesus enjoyed that rest and peace in three realms. In these three realms He was different to all men.

Firstly *in the realm of personal sin* He had perfect rest. He was never distressed by the matter of personal sin. His peace was never disturbed by sin within. There was no sin in Him. He was often pressed to take a wrong course. But He never yielded to the temptation. And because He was capable of suffering, He was tempted to spare Himself. That temptation came one day through Peter — an attempt to turn Him aside from the path of the Cross — when His disciple said to Him: "*Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall never be unto thee!*" Because He was capable of suffering He could be tempted by the enemy. It was a temptation from outside. But it could not disturb His inward peace because He was abandoned to His Father's will. His loyalty to the Father frustrated the temptations. The secret of His peace was His union with the Father.

Then there was *the realm of His own being and nature*. Christ was a united personality. His soul was a united soul, His mind was one mind. There were no double reasonings in Him in conflict with each other. There was no conflict between His own reason and that of His Father. His heart too, was undivided. He did not have two sets of desires in war with each other. Again, His will was one and steadfast. There was no conflict between His will and the will of the Father.

All the temptations He went through were to provoke Him to get away from His Father; to have desires, reasonings, volition which were not altogether of His Father. But such an attitude was out of question for Him. There was no deviation in the least degree from His Father's will. Behind it all was a perfect faith in His Father and His faithfulness. When He suffered, it was according to the will of God, and not because He was in conflict with His own will. Suffering marked Him, but never distracted Him. There was no

strain, no inward controversy with God in His life. He was perfectly restful and harmonious — a united personality.

Much of the lack of peace in our lives comes from our lack of unity. We are in conflict with our own reasoning, our desires, our will. We are torn in two directions, disturbed because of things at war in us. So often we are like two persons fighting each other, in a state of unrest. The same occurs in our relationship with God. Our thoughts and desires are in conflict with God's thoughts and desires. How utterly different in the case of the Lord Jesus! He knew the meaning of an inward peace.

The third realm in which the Lord Jesus enjoyed perfect rest and liberty was *the realm of legal obligations*. The law with its "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," and the countless things to be done and not to be done, all the regulations and observations of the Mosaic law to the Jewish people, was a great burden. To offend on one point of it was to be guilty of all. Then there was the interpretation and application of the law by the Scribes and Pharisees, to whom the Lord Jesus said: "Yea, ye bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders."

In that realm the Lord Jesus was perfectly at rest. He was never in bondage to the law. He lived in the accomplishment of the law with such assurance and certainty like none other. Why was the law given? For what purpose? It was for one purpose only: it was intended to secure God's place and God's rights. Now, the main point of the law was against idolatry. Idolatry is very comprehensive. It is the line along which the devil seeks to get his ends to rob God of His place. Covetousness is idolatry, that is, wanting things for oneself. Irreverence is idolatry; the worship is taken from God. Lust, the gratification of the flesh, is taking God's place. There are many forms of idolatry. If you look at those "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," you will see that every one of them has to do with idolatry. It is taking God's place and rights.

Now God had His perfect place and His rights in the Lord Jesus. He did not need the law because He perfectly fulfilled the law in spirit. He was liberated from the law of works by a higher law. His heart was perfectly at rest in the matter of legal obligations. In Him the law was established in its deepest meaning. God's place and rights were fully secured in Christ.

In the letter to the Hebrews we read much of *rest*. It is the rest in Christ. His rest has to be our rest. I am not going to try to tell you that we must be sinlessly perfect, or that we can never sin again. But we must recognize that the sin-question has to be dealt with first. All our sins are put away in Christ. Jesus Christ has delivered us once and for all from sin. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." No condemnation! Why? Because Christ Himself has dealt abidingly with the sin-question of the past, the present and the future. All that which separated us from God because of sin is forgiven, and we are placed by faith into a position of complete justification before God. Even when we sin again there is forgiveness which abides. Our redemption is an eternal redemption, for it is written: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," and "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us (keeps on cleansing) from all sin." It is now a matter of our union with Him. If we abide in that union with Christ we need not be under condemnation for five minutes. If, when we have failed, we recognize and confess our

sins, they will be forgiven us. So the ground of inward peace and liberty is in Christ. We are delivered through Christ, and in Him. We have to take the word in Romans 8 seriously. We have to stand on it full of joy: "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.*" That is a *condition* resulting from a *position*. "IN CHRIST" there is liberty, there is no condemnation. Just as Christ abode in the Father and had perfect peace as to sin, so we - abiding in Christ - can have perfect peace. It is not the peace from sin extricated from us, but the peace resulting from the continuation of the cleansing virtue of the Blood.

But how do we get experimentally over our divided nature into such a oneness, such a rest, such a peace? The way is just this: as the Lord Jesus gains the upper hand in our hearts, we become more and more one with Him. As we more and more surrender to Him, all the conflict of mind, heart and will ceases. Christ's attitude was absolute abandonment to the Father. He was holding back nothing, ready to do all His will. There was no conflict about it. His whole being was one with the Father. As we let go the self-life, letting Christ get the mastery in us, He brings to an end all the inward conflict. A heart wholly the Lord's is a heart at rest, a heart conformed to the image of Christ. The Lord said: "*Take my yoke upon you,*" that is, "Be perfectly one with Me." A yoke makes two beings into one. That is why it was forbidden in the Old Testament to use an unequal yoke, to put an ass and an ox under one yoke, for these two were entirely different beings. The yoke would tear and hurt them. But we are allowed to be under *one yoke* with the Lord Jesus. The yoke speaks of oneness, fellowship, being governed by one will. Thus we find rest unto our souls.

Then as to the peace in the realm of the law, the question concerning the keeping of the sabbath did not trouble the Lord Jesus in the least. God had His perfect place and rights in Him, although the rulers of the people brought the law continually against Him. Every day and every hour of His life belonged to His God, to His Father. He completely fulfilled the law in Spirit. The Pharisees demanded the keeping of the outward form, the letter, and in doing so they sinned against the Spirit of the Sabbath. There are many Christians who are under the law and therefore in bondage. The way out of this bondage is Christ. You never need worry about the Sabbath day if Christ is LORD in your hearts. The law was given to secure God's place and rights for Him. If Christ is Lord in our lives we do that. Every day is a Sabbath day for those whose Lord is Christ! If we are living in the true spiritual meaning of the law we need not worry about the outward form, the letter. We may be wrong as to the letter, and yet be right before God. What matters is the spiritual meaning — the Life — our union with God, allowing Him to work in us. Christ violated the Sabbath according to the letter, but no one in the whole universe fulfilled the law so perfectly as He did. He said: "*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" Christ is the truth, and transcends the mere letter. If Christ is dwelling in us we can live in His rest and peace. Thus sin shall have no power over us. We need not worry about ourselves; we need not be afraid to fall short in our daily life.

Christ is our peace. Christ is our rest. Rest and liberty always mean strength. If we are without rest we are without effectiveness. Christ is our sufficiency, for all our resources are in Him.

May the Lord lead us into His *own* peace!

## Chapter 9 - The Meaning and Value of Sonship

*"No one knows the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son..."* Matt. 11:27

*"No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him... And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."* John 1:18, 34

*"He that believeth not has been judged already, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God... The Father loves the Son... he that believeth on the Son has eternal life."* John 3:18, 35-36

*"The Father loves the Son... the Son also gives life to whom He will."* John 5:20-21

*"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"* John 9:35-37

*"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby."* John 11:4

*"Glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee."* John 11:4

*"...That they may know the mystery of God, Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden"* Col. 2:2-3

*"Beloved, now are we children of God..."* 1 John 3:1-2

*"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God ... delivered ... into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."* Rom. 8:16,21

*"...That ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish..."* Phil. 2:15

*"...Having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself..."* Eph. 1:5

Continuing in our meditations on Christ in the glory as our sufficiency, we now come to another feature of His resources which is related to sonship.

In the first place let us note that there is a difference between the titles of our Lord Jesus Christ as Son of Man and Son of God. They embrace two aspects of truth and work.

As Son of God the Lord Jesus represents that side of truth in which God Himself was manifested in flesh. After the fall God never again entrusted His work to man. *"God was in Christ."* Christ was Immanuel, God is with us. The title *Son of Man* shows us another side of Christ: God is recovering in the form of man and for man what he has lost. It means God has come down to this earth as man; He has identified Himself with man in order to redeem him. But that title 'son of Man' goes far beyond the ordinary human level. Our Lord Jesus Christ stands far above all other men in His nature. He is the Son of Man from heaven, or, as the Scriptures say, *"who is in heaven."* That could not be said of any other man. They all were from the earth. Christ alone was from heaven as *"the only begotten Son."* It is important to understand the meaning of this.

The Lord Jesus was not altogether the *only begotten Son*. That expression has nothing to do with begetting, for the Scriptures tell us that every believer is begotten of God. Now it does not mean that. That expression has to do with the kind of birth. The Lord Jesus was *uniquely begotten*; He was the only one of this kind. He stood alone as such. All of us have been begotten through the Word of Christ and the Spirit. But all of us are *sinners by nature*, because “*that which is born of the flesh is flesh.*” Therefore Paul says of us who are “*in Christ*” that “*the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.*” Over against that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in flesh was something unique. There was no sin in Him who had come in the likeness of sinful flesh. The Son of God was once for all and in a unique way born. That is the meaning of “the only begotten Son.” He is the Son of Man out from heaven. Both His titles are divine and belong to heaven. As Son of Man and Son of God He is different from all other men. We must not separate these two titles.

As to the practical application, a very great deal is being bound up with the fact that the Lord Jesus was the Son of God. Notice how often the Lord Jesus refers to His sonship, how much depended upon that for Him. It meant everything to Him. If He had not known it He would have been without the main strength which characterized His life. He lived triumphantly and worked mightily and effectively, because He knew that He was in that essential relationship with His Father.

Let us be diligent that we too derive our strength from the living knowledge that we are, through our Lord Jesus Christ, sons of God. The very fact that He was the Son of God brought to Him a wonderful strength which made Him superior to all other men, in position as well as a person. It was a right kind of superiority, and marked by deepest humility. He could truly say of Himself: “*I am meek and lowly in heart.*” Yet there was a wonderful strength and dignity about Him. Despised of men, with no earthly estate, He could lift up His head like a king. The consciousness that He possessed what no man had was without any self-assertiveness. It saved Him from an “inferiority complex” which is never a sign of humility. He knew that He had a mission from above. He had a perfect right to stand up among men. He could meet them all, poor and rich, because He knew that God had sent Him. And men recognized that strength in Him. They were conscious of a dignity and a power which was about Him that compelled them to say of Him that He was speaking “*as having authority and not as the scribes.*” He had perfect confidence in what He said and the way He took. The explanation is found on the ground of who He was. “*I am come down from heaven.*” It was sonship which gave Him this strength — that wonderful relationship He had with His Father.

Now the spiritual value of that divine sonship is ours. This does not mean that there has to be any pride or conceit. We have to be like He was, meek among men, lowly in heart and unassuming. There has to be no self-assertiveness, yet we must have the strength of the Son of God. We ought never to have anything apologetic about our testimony. We are sons of God. John says: “*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and we are.*” It is the affirmation of a fact. “*Now we are the children of God.*” Let us stand upon that fact. What a strength would be ours if we truly recognized the position we have as sons before God through our Lord Jesus Christ! “*The Father loves the Son.*” That holds true for all the children of God. Sonship is based upon the Father’s special love. “*The Father knows the Son.*” We

too are known of Him. The world knows us not. It may look at us as a very poor specimen, but it knew Him not. But the Father knows and loves His children. That is our strength.

Then again let us note that sonship is basic to resurrection (Rom. 1:4). The whole creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God, because it was created for them. But it is now subject to vanity and put into severe limitation. For when Adam (who was the crown of God's creation) fell, the whole creation fell with him and sonship was suspended. Consequently the whole creation suffers. It is groaning and in travail until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. But when the sons of God are revealed, then the creation too will be delivered from the curse of sin and of death, and brought into glory. Thus there are high privileges bound up with sonship. The whole creation is depending upon us. The whole universe is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. How could we overlook the tremendous meaning and vocation of our sonship? Whatever we are among men, there are tremendous possibilities bound up with us for the world. It is unspeakably great and has nothing to do with self-importance. For God has willed it so that everything in this universe should depend upon us and our sonship. We are born of God in order to be conformed into the likeness of the Son of God. Growing up into Him we are allowed to enter into the high position of a heavenly calling which is appointed for the sons of God.

Now sonship is the basis of God's activity. The position and vocation of sonship has nothing to do with an "official" appointment. God's dealings with us are not on an official ground; it is not because we have taken up some Christian work, or go by a certain name which represents a special office, that God is interested in us. To be ministers or Christian workers does not imply that God is especially working through us. God's dealings with us are based upon our relationship with Him as children of God. He is dealing with us as with sons. It is a spiritual thing not an official matter. Ministry, therefore, results from a special relationship to God. The real work of God depends on our spiritual relationship with Him, and the value of our service is in proportion to our union with God.

Only those who are absolutely one with God can take responsibilities for Him. Whatever we may call ourselves, however great may be our activity for the Lord, God does not take account of that. It is no use coming to Him and saying: "Now Lord, You know that I am engaged in this work, and therefore I want You to help me in this." That is no reason why He should help us. God stands by His children and only works with them on the basis of an inward relationship. Some person who is not in an "official" position may be far more useful to the Lord than many who have an official ministry and position. What matters is not our spiritual knowledge or official ministry, but our secret relationship with God. God fits us spiritually for His service and upholds our sonship, not our office. He will see to our position if we see to our relationship with Him.

God called Israel His firstborn. He stood by His people on the basis of that sonship. Therefore Israel could take an important and significant position among the nations. It was the chosen vessel of God's testimony in the earth. But the day came when it ceased to go on with God as His firstborn. Its inward relationship to God became merely an outward form and God had to withdraw from His people and send them into captivity. It would have been useless if Israel had turned to the Lord with this complaint "Why are

You dealing with us in such a way? Are we not Your representative among the nations?" God's answer would have been: "The official position is nothing to Me. I cannot help you as long as your relationship to Me is not right, as long as you are not in that which your sonship means and demands." You see our position and vocation is in relation to sonship. For that very reason the Lord Jesus put the emphasis upon sonship. He never said that the Father loved the ministry He had come to fulfill on this earth. But He said: "*The Father loves the Son.*" Position and vocation have to be based upon sonship. Without sonship they are worthless before God.

What is the purpose of sonship? It is to bring us into a place of spiritual responsibility. God never puts responsibilities upon "official people," but upon sons. Therefore He has to train us as children in order to develop sonship in us, to bring us there where we can take responsibilities for God. He seeks to bring us to a state of spiritual maturity, to full growth. This cannot be done in some Bible school, or by putting people "into the ministry." God never works on an official side. Oh yes, God does take us into His school. He can also take us into His school in some training institute. And it is a blessed thing if He does it. But God's school is something very different from mere scholarly activity. His Word says: "*My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reprov'd of Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.*" Note this word "whom He receives." The exact meaning in the Greek is not "receives," but "whom He positions" or places. It is a matter of position. God is seeking to develop a state in us where He can trust us. When God is dealing with us, there is behind it a wonderful assurance that He is going to put His trust in us. He is bringing us into a position of trust. We do not just want to be servants, bits of a machine, but sons who have become one with the Father, and in whose hands He can put spiritual responsibilities. When we truly recognize this, we begin to understand why God is dealing with us as He does. But because God is in it we know that the end is sure. He will bring His children through.

The fact of His sonship gave to the Lord Jesus perfect assurance as to the ultimate issue and accomplishment of His life. It carried Him far, although He knew that the Cross was immediately ahead, and He was going to be killed. He ministered here for three and a half years, and then all His earthly life came to an end. How did He face it? He regarded it as something to come and to pass, but it made no difference to Him and His relationship to the Father. His sufferings were just a tunnel to go through, and then to come out into the light to go on for all eternity, because He was the Son of God. Death was a mere incident for Him, for His sonship was indestructible, eternal. He knew that His work did not finish on the Cross, but was going on, on the ground of resurrection for all eternity. He was not just living for this little space of time. Thus He derived His strength from the fact of sonship.

Are we saying this is the end of all? Do we take the trials of this earthly life as something incidental which are passing, and which make no difference to us and our inward state? We should be aware that if we go through the grave (if the Lord tarries), it is but a passing through into enlargement. We shall have a service and a glorious future in the ages to come. "*His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face.*" This knowledge of sonship carried the Lord Jesus through the darkness of the Cross in triumph. His last word was "*Father.*" It would have been otherwise if the Cross had been

the end of all. His disciples thought that all had come to an end. But later they understood that it meant something more than that. It was the beginning of a new thing — sonship was in view. In the case of the Lord Jesus that position of sonship brought a mighty assurance to Him as to the issue of things. Behind it was the strength of a death-conquering eternal life.

That assurance holds good for us too. If we look at our Lord Jesus in the glory our questions will be solved. What God is after is the consummation of sonship. Sonship is the basis upon which the Father gives all His fullness, which makes all things possible for us. *“For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things, that He does Himself.”* The Lord Jesus knew that *“the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God.”*

Look again at the letter to the Hebrews where we are told that the whole inheritance is given in relation to sonship. The Father’s fullness is included in sonship. It may be that we have not much here on earth. Certainly the Lord Jesus had not much in the way of earthly goods, but He could say: *“In my Father’s house are many mansions.”* And what a house of fullness this is! He knew that He was heir of all things. What is included in this inheritance? Paul writes to the Colossians that *“in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”* What does that mean for us? Just this, that *“in Him we are made full.”*

In Colossians chapter 1 we read that all the fullness of the universe was created in Christ and unto Christ, the Son of God’s love. And in chapter 2 we see the place we have in Him. The sons are sharing the fullness of the Son. Now there is given us a foretaste of this, for we have received of His fullness grace upon grace. *“Though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”* What is that glory? It is the day of His appearing. Something of the coming glory is shining into our hearts now, for we believe in Him. Faith brings the future glory into present enjoyment. Faith in Christ in heaven brings joy to our hearts. We derive our strength from that union with Christ in the glory, in being one with Him, as He is one with the Father. Out from Him and our fellowship with Him flows His fullness to us.

What a privilege and joy to know that we are sons of God through Jesus Christ our Lord; that we have become fellow-heirs of the glory which the Father has given to His Son! There is a fullness of strength in the knowledge of sonship. Let us seek to live continually in the consciousness of that fact that we are sons of God.

*“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and we are.”*

## Chapter 10 - The Secret Strength of Divine Purpose

When here on earth, the Lord Jesus had His life continually in heaven. He never took things for granted, but maintained a life *all of faith*. He triumphed over the situations here on earth in the power of faith and by prayer. Prayer had a very large place in His life. He continually drew from His heavenly resources the needed strength and means to accomplish His work for the glory of the Father. It was a faith activity in relation to His Father, and it was necessary for Him. How much more should we live on this basis of faith and prayer in union with Him!

Now let us consider the last of these secret resources of Christ — the strength of a divine purpose.

The Lord Jesus was conscious that He was bound up with an eternal and universal purpose. In Matthew 16:18 we read that He said, in view of that purpose: *“I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”* Let us understand the force and significance of that statement.

The Lord Jesus knew that He was on the way to the Cross. Immediately after the great declaration of Peter concerning Christ as the Son of the living God, the Lord Jesus began to speak to His disciples of the Cross, showing them that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer. Now in the face of this there is that deliberate statement of the Lord: *“I will build my church.”* It clearly shows that the purpose of Christ’s life cannot be defeated through death. The Cross cannot destroy it. He said in effect: “I am going to be crucified, but I am come to build my church, and I shall build it. The purpose I have come for cannot be interfered with; the Cross cannot hinder it.” Here we see a definite purpose which characterized His life, and which was mightier than death. Yes, He even added: *“and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”* All the forces of darkness cannot prevent the purpose of His life, for it is bound up with eternity, with a power that death and hell cannot withstand.

Let us note the emphatic marks of that purpose in the following passages of Scripture:

*“My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to accomplish His work.”* John 4:34

*”The Father that sent Him... he that... believeth Him that sent Me.”* John 5:23-24

*”...That sent Me... the Father that sent Me.”* John 5:30, 37

There are other verses which express in a similar way that definite purpose such as:

*“I am come that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.”*

*“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

In all these references we recognize a special mission. Behind the coming of the Lord Jesus into this world we see a definite, predetermined purpose. He did not only come for some enterprise or campaign. He was not starting a movement. Everything in His life was in relation to a divine purpose. There was a definite plan in the eternal counsels of God *“before the foundation of the world,”* which the Lord Jesus came to fulfill. That is why it could not be frustrated. Even the gates of hell could not prevail against it.

In the life of the Lord Jesus there was nothing merely incidental. Everything had a definite purpose. Therefore the prophet Isaiah called Him "*the servant of the Lord.*" How often the Lord Jesus said with regard to His mission: "*I must.*" There is something imperative in His words: "*I must work the works of Him that sent me.*" It speaks of a total absence of anything indefinite.

The gospel according to Mark is characterized by definiteness, showing the Lord Jesus as the Servant of the Lord. The word peculiar to Mark is 'straight away.' It occurs some forty times in the gospel, showing how the servant should be. If we are here for the Lord and His service, we have no time to lose. Our whole heart has to be devoted to Him, and our life marked by purpose in obedience to Him. Our attitude, in relation to Him, has to always be 'straight away.'

So the Lord Jesus derived much strength from this knowledge of purpose with which His life was bound up. There is no doubt that we too shall get strength from that sense of purpose, that consciousness of a divine vocation which is ours. That is why the enemy always tries to discourage us. He seeks to raise questions and doubts in our hearts as to the reaching of the goal, telling us that our labour is in vain. If he succeeds to rob us of that sense of purpose in our life, to make us doubt with regard to our testimony, our work, or the value of the suffering we have to go through, we shall lose our strength and the enemy will get the upper hand.

Jesus Christ was maintained in God's strength all the way through, because He was dominated by the sense of His mission, because He kept firm His purpose. If we hold fast the purpose of our life, if we keep in view our heavenly calling, we too shall be maintained in strength. But if we try to fulfill some ambition of our own, if we carry out our own programs, if we keep some movement going, there will be no divine resources available for us. In order to be maintained in strength it is essential that we know that we are in the purpose of God. Our service must always be the result of a divine purpose. It is of the greatest importance for us to realize that we have a place in God's plan. We have to deny ourselves. In God's purpose there is no room for personal interests. "*To them that love God,*" to them whose heart is taken up with God and the fulfillment of His purpose, "*all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose.*" That is a definite statement showing believers are called into a divine purpose. We have got to know as definitely as the Lord Jesus knew, that we are in God's purpose.

Paul speaks in his letters repeatedly of those who are called "*according to His purpose.*" In Ephesians 3:10-11 we have one of these definite statements: "*that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose.*" We might think of it in the future tense, but it clearly says "now." God is doing something now in His church which is teaching principalities and powers. We are surrounded by unseen intelligences who are watching God's dealings with us. They are watching the experiences we have to go through, and which are bound up with God's eternal purpose. What is that purpose? It is that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. In Jer. 18:2-3 we read: "*Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words... and behold, he was making a work on the wheels.*" Principalities and powers have, so to speak, come down to the potter's house and they

watch. What is that vessel in the hands of the potter? It is the church. But the heavenly Potter is not satisfied with His vessel. He has to break it and form a new one. Now the clay is on the wheel, and there have to be all kinds of divine dealings and workings, and these unseen intelligences are watching how the heavenly Potter is forming us. We are that clay, and sometimes we feel the pressure of the Potter's hands, and the cuttings, whilst He is shaping His church. But all our trials and our sufferings, all our perplexities are only God's way to bring us to the goal. All His dealings have an effect upon us, and bring about a change in us. And the higher intelligences see it and wonder at God's wisdom at how Christ is being formed in us more and more.

That is our calling. So long as we are in line with God's purpose His work can go on in us. What matters is not first of all our activity. God is more concerned with what is done in us than what we do for Him. He often reaches His end with us much better when we are in a state of inactivity than in times of much work. The hand of the Potter was upon Moses when he was in the wilderness where he could not do much. During forty years he was just looking after a few sheep. That is not very grand. No doubt he wondered sometimes to what purpose he was there, whether his life had any value. But principalities and powers saw something and wondered at God's wisdom. God knew how to equip this man, how to get His way in that life. That is true in the case of many a servant of God. God is working for good, He is shaping His vessel. There is wisdom in all His dealings with us. But we have to see to it that we have no plans or personal ambitions of our own. The clay has to be completely in His hands. If we are really here for God, we can be assured that He will reach His end, that He may work out His purpose in us. And there we shall find strength.

Are you sure you are in the great purpose of God? Everybody has some part in it. Paul, when speaking of the church, illustrates it thus: *"that all the body is fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplies."* No part of the body is without function. Each and every one has to be in God's purpose. Some parts may be very small, they nevertheless are equally important. We have to remember that God has called us for a purpose which will be realized as we abandon ourselves to Him. Whatever it may be to which He has called us, let us be ready and do it. A Holy Spirit possessed life is always marked by purpose. Nothing can be lost in such a life; let us not believe in mere generalities. That is not good enough. There is something far more definite in God's thoughts for our lives. Let us abandon all personal desires, and be filled with the Spirit of urgency — 'straight away.' Those who know that they are called of God, and who definitely recognize the purpose of their life, will be wholly given up to it. Such no longer have any interest for the things of this earth. They have no time to lose. They must buy up their time.

Now our life is bound up with our Lord Jesus Christ in the glory. God's eternal purpose reigns over us with universal dimensions, as vast as that domain of principalities and powers in the heavenlies. The church of Jesus Christ is entrusted with a tremendous, unfathomable plan of God. To know this means strength. To know this keeps us not only calm in times of perplexity and trial through which God is working out His plan, but it also fills us with that peace and joy, which — as the Lord said — the world cannot take away from us.

We are in the great purpose of God, called with a heavenly calling. There is nothing incidental about our lives. Our time is fixed by God. We are in God's appointments. His purpose is not yet completed. The coming of Christ on this earth was only the first stage of it, but since Christ is in heaven there is now a fuller outworking of His purpose concerning the church. So let us recognize in all things the will of our heavenly Father, in putting our trust in Him, and let us look to the goal in Spirit, believing that we shall reach it by His grace.

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