

The Battle for the Throne

by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter 1 - The Battle for the Throne

Reading: 2 Chronicles 12:10-12; 13:1-21.

Genesis 3:15. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

(I need not remind you that that was addressed to the serpent.)

Revelation 17:14. "...and they also shall overcome that are with him..."

That which I believe the Lord has laid on my heart very definitely and strongly for this season of our gathering together is what is represented by those passages, and many others, namely:

THE BATTLE FOR THE THRONE.

In the history of this world as it is recorded in the Scriptures, the first and the final issue is that of dominion. Every other factor and element is gathered into that. The books of Genesis and Revelation bound that history, and two factors characterise those two books in a comprehensive way. All the other books of the Bible are but aspects of that whole matter. Their value is the specific aspect of the entire issue with which they respectively deal. That might be a help to you in your future readings in any one book of the Bible, that is, to note its distinctive aspect of the comprehensive truth.

The two comprehensive features of Genesis and the Revelation are *dominion* and *redemption*. In Genesis the order is dominion and—because the dominion was lost—the redemptive programme. In the Revelation the order is the redemptive programme consummated and dominion restored. Let me repeat that. Everything that lies between Genesis and the Revelation represents aspects of that comprehensive truth—dominion and redemption, redemption and dominion. But note: in both of these books comprehensively, and in all the other books specifically, redemption is always subservient to dominion. That is one of the things which we shall more fully consider as we go on.

I want to pause for a moment just to say something by way of parenthesis. It is that we are not at this time occupied with some scheme or system of truth, but rather with the ultimate issue of this universe, and this is a matter which, more than ever in the history of this world, concerns the people of God at this time. If, as we believe is the case, we are approaching the end of the dispensation, then the issue of all the dispensations is on the immediate horizon. If you were asked, what is the issue of the dispensation? You would probably answer, The coming of the Lord. I want to say that that is only introductory to the issue. The issue is the dominion of the universe. We hail the coming of the Lord because of what it means in its outworking. It is not merely an isolated event, it is something which carries with it all that has been pointed unto through the ages, and all that God eternally intended before time was. That is, God's method and means, and basis and character of the government of this universe. So that we are occupied with no small thing, and it is necessary for us to get the magnitude of the background, in order to give us an adequate motive for facing the conflict. For the conflict in which we are today, beloved of God, is no personal thing, no small, narrow, local matter. We are in THE conflict, it is heading up—and we believe very soon—to the final settlement of the government of this universe; dominion according to God's mind. We are in that conflict today. If you are knowing anything of the history of spiritual conflict, that is the explanation.

Well, all that is parenthetical, in order that we might face this matter in a right way, not thinking that we are just to get teaching. We are to face the most practical issue that has ever been presented to man, and not only to man but to angels and demons.

Man and His Inherent Functions

Having said that, we are able to get closer and closer to this matter. And at this point we have to introduce man as being central to the conflict and to the issue. There are three inherent faculties in man's constitution according to the Divine design and purpose. Those three inherent faculties in man's constitution are prophet, priest and king. I want you to take very careful notice of the way in which that is put. It is said that those are inherent faculties in the constitution of man according to the Divine design and purpose. These are not merely temporary or periodic functions, neither are they merely offices.

(We are not dealing with the specific gift of prophets or prophecy. Such were—as we understand the Scriptures—given in a relative and not a primary way. They related to bringing the Lord's people into the fullness of His thought. The specific gift will "cease," but the spiritual reality will remain.)

We will say more about that later.

In the Scriptures these three things overlap and run together in normal times. When things are right and according to God's mind they all obtain at the same time, at least in principle. When things are either undeveloped or deranged they either disappear or are out of proportion. (Of course, you will have to be working pretty energetically with your background knowledge of the Word to be able to follow this and confirm it, for we cannot stay to fill in all detail). Let me repeat that. In the Scriptures these three things overlap and run throughout together in normal times. When things are not normal, that is, when they are undeveloped or when they are deranged, either or all of these disappear or else they are out of proportion. The book of Judges, covering some 400 years, is an abnormal and deranged state of things, and the constant repetition in the book of Judges is: "And there was no king." That explains a lot.

The Prophet and Priest Related to the Throne

Now I want you to notice another thing which is very important. The prophet and the priest are always related to the throne. The king is above them, and they are for him. In other words, all that is represented by the functions of prophet and priest is unto dominion. That is not very profound. I think that lies on the face of an ordinary reading of the Scriptures. Take the books of the Prophets. What has the prophet to do with? The throne, always! Our chapter (2 Chronicles 13) shows how the priest also relates to the throne. It was by the action of the priest that the young king, rescued from the massacre of the seed royal, came to the throne, in accordance, you notice, with the word of the Lord to David, but it was through the priest. When that priest died that throne was upset, all went wrong in the land; but while that priest remained alive, with his influence toward the throne, the government was pure and right. So that what is borne out by the Scriptures very fully and clearly is that the functions of the prophet and the priest are unto dominion. These three, while manifested in the form of office, rather represent spiritual features than official status. (It is necessary for me to work myself through all this seeming technique in order to reach the necessary end, but I think it is all vital, all important, and it ought to be all very instructive). Let me repeat that these three things—prophet, priest, king— while manifested in the form of office, rather represent spiritual features than official status. Take that which they represent spiritually.

The Spiritual Meaning of the Prophet

PROPHET. The prophetic function is related to spiritual knowledge. Now stay with that and think! Spiritual knowledge is the nature of the prophetic function. What does that mean? It represents the expression of the mind, the thought; so that in the prophetic office you have God's thought placed in the mind of His instrument, which is in the nature of spiritual knowledge. The prophet's knowledge was not studied, was not got from manuals and commentaries. It was revelation, spiritual knowledge. It was not the fruit of the activity and energy of his own brain, it came by the Spirit of the Lord. The true prophet has always to express his ministry in some way like this: "The hand of the Lord was upon me," or, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon so-and-so and he prophesied." So that the prophetic function has to do with spiritual knowledge, deposited as God's thought in the mind of His instrument.

The Meaning of the Priest

PRIEST. The priestly function has to do with righteousness. It is a moral question when you come into the realm of the priest, and this not only in the mind but in the heart. The prophet represents the mind of God, the priest represents the heart of God on all moral matters, gathered up into all that is meant by the word "righteousness," hating iniquity. That is a matter of the heart, and that comes within the compass of the priest. That is why, in the Holy Spirit's taking up through Paul of the symbolism of the Divine provision against the enemy, the breastplate is the breastplate of righteousness. It is a matter of the heart. Righteousness here is a matter of the state of the heart, and the keeping of the heart and its affections and its desires holy, in the sense of moral integrity.

The Meaning of the King

THE KING. The king, the throne, has to do with holiness; holiness in a spiritual sense. This is a matter of the will. Holiness is the foundation of His Throne; spiritual holiness, not only moral integrity and uprightness. This relates to the will, and brings in the whole matter of authority. Authority in the last analysis is a matter of spiritual holiness. Trace that through God's Word. Track that down to its final representations in the New Testament, and you will see that it was because of His spiritual holiness that the Lord Jesus was able to utterly cast out the prince of this world. "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." "Now is the prince of this world cast out." Authority, dominion, the throne, has to do with spiritual holiness, working through the will. How did the Lord defeat the prince of this world when He came to overthrow him and to rob him of the dominion which He knew was vested in Him? His utter devotion to holiness, and that devotion expressing itself in a will bent with every ounce of its strength upon pursuing that path of holiness.

You come up against a mighty will when you come up against the Lord Jesus in the wilderness with the devil. See the resolution; see the unwavering purpose. Follow Him right through all His temptations: "I come to do thy will..."; "Not my will, but thine"; "He set his face as a flint..." But what was the governing factor of that will? It was holiness. It was against compromise with what was unclean. It was against compromise with an unclean world. "All these (the kingdoms of this world) will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Ah! But they are unclean, therefore unacceptable, and the strength of the will is seen in this, that He would rather go to the Cross and suffer all its agony to keep clean in God's way than He would accept the easy way out and the government of the kingdoms of this world in their unclean state. That is the King. You see, dominion is no mere despotism, it has a character. It is spiritual holiness.

Now you see what I meant when I said that, while these three things are manifested in the form of office they rather represent spiritual features, so that you have mind, heart, will. The mind with God's thoughts, the heart with God's standard of righteousness, the will with God's strength of holiness—prophet, priest and king.

I want to take you back again, and remind you that there are these three constituents in the nature of man according to God's mind. This is how man is made when God makes him. He is made with these things in his being. They are not things which developed in the course of history, that God said, Now, in organising Our system We must have prophets, and priests and kings. Those things were all the expression of an inward thing, which was constituent in the creation of man. This is the image of God in which man was made, and it expresses itself. You must remember that back of everything historical and typical in the Word of God there are spiritual realities. You have to get back of the prophet and the priest and the king and see what is the heavenly, spiritual meaning of this. The prophet is God represented in His reason and intelligence. Through the prophet the Word of the Lord is; "Come now, and let us *reason* together, saith the Lord." That is, Let us get down to Divine thoughts. "Your thoughts are not my thoughts, neither are your ways my ways...." There is the expanse of distance as between earth and heaven between your thoughts, and your ways, and Mine, and you must come back to My thoughts, My ways. That is the work of the prophet. The priest is God represented in His moral qualities. You notice what the function of the priest was. It was to examine and scrutinise the offering; to, if possible, find a fault, a flaw. We have sometimes said that the priest was the most expert fault-finder in history. It was the business of the priest, if he could, to find a blemish. If he could, then that offering could not be accepted, it was excluded. And when at length, passing his expert eye, the sacrifice was without spot and without blemish, it was offered to God. That is all a question of moral blemishes, and the priest, therefore, in his function represents God in His moral qualities. The king represents God in His government, and His government is controlled by the law of spiritual holiness.

Now all this was vested in man in creation. Man was constituted by these elements. Man was not merely appointed to these offices. If you could now just follow that ahead, you would see that every child of God who comes into line with God's design and intention and purpose is a prophet, a priest and a king, by constitution and not by appointment. The appointment was a consequent or a subsequent thing. What I mean is this: God never merely appoints to office. God makes men that *are that*. He does not appoint priests, He makes men priests. He does not appoint prophets, He makes prophets. He does not appoint kings, He makes kings. That is a law which governs everything in the Divine order. God never takes from among men someone selectively and appoints him to office, and says, Now I am going to make you a minister, that is, I appoint you a minister. God takes hold of men and women and puts them through the fire and constitutes them something, and everybody has to say, That is a prophet; that is a priest; that is a king; in a spiritual sense.

A Weakness in Organised Christianity

The phrase "organised Christianity" has been used with a good deal of, shall we say, criticism. It is a phrase which means disrepute amongst some of us. Now you understand what we mean. It simply means that organised Christianity represents a system, an appointment by man, an election by man instead of inward constitution or spiritual formation, by God. One is organised, the other is organic. A prophet is not an officer, a priest is not an officer, a king is not an officer in the first instance. These are the functions which come out of the very constitution of the person or persons in view. They represent something which God put into man when He made him as from Himself. It is very important to notice that as we go on.

Let me repeat my last statement. God never merely appoints to office. He makes men who ARE that spiritually, and then calls attention to what He has done.

The Range of Man's Dominion

I would like to take one further fragment before breaking off, with a word about the extent of man's dominion, because we are not primarily occupied with the prophet and the priest.

What we have said has been said in order to give the full circuit of man's constitution, and we have emphasised that the prophet and the priest are unto the king, and our specific object is the king, or rather, dominion. We want to recognise afresh the extent of man's dominion according to God's original thought in His creation. Looking at the Scriptures, at man created by God, before anything else happens, we find, firstly, that the dominion of man is related to nature, that is, the three kingdoms, the animal kingdom, the vegetable, and the mineral. That was man's kingdom in nature, where he was given dominion. "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." That in the first instance, related to Adam. But, secondly, his kingdom, his dominion extended beyond the sphere of nature. It was also spiritual, and embraced the sphere of angels, unfallen and fallen. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation." They are our ministers. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" "He gave them authority over unclean spirits." "Behold, I give you power (authority) over all the power of the enemy." Man's dominion reaches into the spiritual realm. I am speaking now of man according to God's mind.

Note two things, perhaps a little difficult to grasp as they are said in the first instance, but I will repeat them in order that you may be able to get them. Man's delegated dominion from God gave him dominion or government over the kosmos, that is, the world order. Man's faithful and obedient allegiance to God gave him authority over the spiritual forces beyond the kosmos. Let us work backward and prove it. When man was unfaithful and disobedient he lost his authority over the spiritual forces. They took the upper hand of man. Resultantly he lost his government over the kosmos. Man's dominion over nature and the world order was conditioned by his faithful obedience to God, but that faithful obedience to God put him in a position of government over the world, by having dominion over the spiritual forces in the world. This has a tremendous bearing upon the last chapter of the Ephesian letter and the book of the Revelation. You see the issue of the ages to be man brought back to authority over the spiritual forces in the universe and establishing the government of God in the earth. That is redemption.

If you think this is a vast, far away thing, something too much beyond your grasp, let me say to you that this applies to the weakest child of God. There is not one who is not called to this. Can you see the discrimination that is implied and involved by and in what I have said? Kings, priests, prophets, are not in God's thought isolated individuals, forming a special class. Those things relate to the whole. It is a kingdom of priests, that is, kingship ultimately is corporate, collective, not merely individual. That is God's original thought. If the thing were individual and specific it would be autocratic and despotic. That does not mean that because it is universal it is democratic, but it does mean that it is theocratic—God over all—BUT through His new creation. God's nature expressing itself to the full in a new heaven and a new earth, through a new people. To that you and I are called, every one of us, the weakest, the simplest. We are in the battle for the Throne. We shall be touching upon problems which may arise as we go on, but I do want you to recognise this, that man was constituted for dominion, but he was conditioned as to his dominion, and the condition was faithful and obedient allegiance to God.

It is exactly where you find the Lord Jesus in the book of the Revelation; when you come to find Him Lord of lords and King of kings, you find He is "the Faithful and True Witness."

We are touching the last thing; we are touching the Throne. We are coming to, "Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne..." and when that happens Satan will be cast down from heaven, and there will be no more place found for him. That is what is in view. We are in that conflict now.

Chapter 2 - The Fall

Reading: Psalm 8:1-6; Hebrews 2.

We have now to speak of the Fall and to notice three things about it, namely, its object, its nature, its consequences.

The Object Behind the Fall

What was the object of the fall, so far as the Adversary was concerned? It was nothing else than world dominion. It was not just to mar God's work, not just to spite God, not just to gratify some unholy and malignant whim. It was to possess a position, to obtain a place. What Lucifer has failed to achieve in heaven he will seek to achieve in earth. What he has failed to accomplish against God directly he will now seek to accomplish against God indirectly through man. He was aware that dominion was vested in Adam; spiritual dominion and the government of the Kosmos. He was aware of the conditions upon which that dominion rested and was held, namely, faithful obedience and allegiance to God. He was also aware of the threefold faculty of that dominion, the faculty of prophet and of priest and of king. His object was to secure that Kosmic and spiritual dominion which was vested conditionally in Adam, and for which Adam had been constituted. The thing in view with the adversary was world dominion. We know from the rest of the Scriptures, and especially from specific statements in the New Testament, that he got it, and even Christ did not dispute that he had it.

The Nature of the Fall

The nature of the fall makes very clear that the adversary directed his attention, firstly to the condition of the dominion, and then to the character of the dominion. The condition was faithfulness, obedience, allegiance to God. He struck at that. That is so familiar that we need not analyse it nor say any more about it. It is quite clear that it was in the direction or in the realm of Adam's relationship to God in the obedience of faith that the enemy directed his attempt, his effort, his energies.

(1) The Spiritual Mind

He also recognised this three-fold basis or faculty in dominion, that of the prophet, the priest and the king; and, seeing that in the first case it was the spiritual mind which was the feature of his dominion he struck at it, and dealt with man along the line of reason. Thus he countered spiritual-mindedness with merely human reasoning. There is a big history attached to that. You notice how he argues. (The very fact that man will listen to the devil arguing is a sure way to his being dethroned. Argue with the devil and you will lose your spiritual position. And do not let the devil argue with you. The Lord Jesus had none of that. When Satan would argue with Him, He said: "It is written...." That is final; He does not argue, the thing is settled.) The realm of the mind was assailed by the devil. God had said, and that ought to have been enough (it was enough for the last Adam). But the mind was assailed and the mind was opened. Beloved, there is never anything wrong in having your mind assailed, the wrong is when you give the mental assent to the assault. Demas departed from Paul and went back into the world, and we are told that it was because he loved this present evil world. But that is only the end of a history. The world made its appeal. Demas could have shut the door and said, I will have none of it; but he assented to the appeal, and that is where his fall came. In the same way Adam, instead of at once closing the door to such arguments as were bringing into question God's known mind, assented to the assault in that realm and lost his prophetic faculty. You see the first realm of the attack.

(2) The Pure Heart

Then the priestly faculty was assailed—the heart, the desire. The whole thing, of course, was very beautiful, dressed up, gilded as not to appear wrong and unrighteous, but something to be desired. Oh! what a lot that gives away—"to be desired." The heart, the

desires, the whole direction was unrighteous, wrong, but the priestly function was assailed in the heart with an unrighteous desire.

(3) The Holy Will

Then the dominion, the kingly faculty, the will. Once the mind and the heart are captured, it is not far to go to catch the will, and that is the order. Reason over on the side of the devil, desire over on his side, and it will not be long before the will follows. So the authority is assailed, the dominion. But there was a deep-seated principle of spiritual holiness.

That is the nature of the fall. The prophet, the priest, and the king, in all that that means spiritually, as spiritual features, were assailed and, by consent, surrendered to the enemy.

The Consequences of the Fall

What are the consequences of the fall? They are quite obviously and naturally in keeping with the nature. They are, in the realm of the spirit or the spiritual mind, blindness and darkness. And that is how we find fallen man: "Having the understanding darkened". The whole teaching of the New Testament on spiritual blindness, spiritual darkness—"the god of this age hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving"—is bound up with the fall.

The spiritual mind is not in the natural man. He has lost the knowledge of God, spiritually. He has no spiritual understanding. That is the prophet.

In the realm of the priest, the heart, there is malice or enmity against God. That is the natural man. You see the opposites. The true priest represents the love of God, the heart side of things. Aaron always represents the heart aspect of things. God read Aaron's heart right at the beginning. The very first thing that you have said about Aaron as he comes into fellowship with Moses is, from God to Moses: "Aaron thy brother... when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart." That is the Lord having read Aaron's heart, and Aaron comes in on the heart side of things. He always represents the affections, just as Moses represents the government. But now you see the heart, or the priestly feature and faculty, has been interfered with, overthrown, and now, instead of love toward God, it is enmity against God. That is the natural man, and it does not matter what you say about multitudes of good people unsaved in this world not being at enmity with God, and repudiate strongly any such suggestion, the fact remains. There is not a man or a woman who has ever been on this earth who, if put into certain given circumstances, would not manifest enmity against God. It only wants circumstances to do it. Try them on Job's line and see!

The will—the king? Where is the natural man if he is not in bondage in the realm of his will? Say what he may about liberty, freedom, there is no man free. There is no such thing as liberty in this creation. Bondage to sin and to death, and also—unconsciously with many—to the devil.

The prophet, the priest and the king in spiritual meaning has simply been overthrown in the fall, and these are the consequences; consequences with which we are all too sadly familiar.

The Spiritual Battle of all Time

Now, in the realm of the three-fold function of man according to God's mind the fact and nature of the fall is continuously manifested. This will head up to and in Anti-Christ for its full expression. What I mean is this; whenever God has raised up an instrument, either individual or collective, of this character, and with this object, to fulfil this function of prophet, priest and king in principle, to express the Divine government, the battle has immediately commenced along these three lines.

THE PROPHET—The battle commences along the line of the prophetic function, that is, along the line of the spiritual mind. What is the nature of that assault? Unbelief! Unbelief is the first step in the assault upon the spiritual mind. That is the first step, therefore, in the

assault upon the prophetic function, as an expression of God's thought. But then it intensifies, and history is full of it from its first phase of—shall we say—simple unbelief, through all its intensified phases of rationalism.

Rationalism

Rationalism is a direct assault upon the spiritual mind, and therefore an assault upon the prophetic faculty. That is, God's thought represented and expressed. Rationalism is against that. Atheism resulted. Unbelief, rationalism, atheism; these are the direct methods of attacking that which is meant by the prophet—a spiritual revelation of God's mind. It is tremendously illuminating if you follow it out. Put on one side spiritual revelation of God's mind, the expression of the mind of God as given by the Holy Spirit. Over against that you have positively set, unbelief, rationalism and atheism. Is that not so? It assails the prophet, which every man and woman in living relationship to God is called to be. The prophet is not a specific office, but an inherent constitutional faculty in every man according to God's will. That is, you and I and every child of God—all the Lord's people—are called to have the spiritual mind, the knowledge of God by revelation of the Holy Ghost. That constitutes a prophet. I know that there are various aspects of prophetic expression, but that is the principle, whatever the aspects. If it is forth-telling, well, the only forth-telling that comes within the compass of God's appointing is by revelation of the Holy Ghost. That the fore-telling is that, it goes without saying, but it is the unveiling of God by the Holy Spirit. Over against that are positively set these things mentioned.

While that is the direct method, there are less direct methods. The apostle speaks and warns about philosophy: "lest any man SPOIL YOU through philosophy." That word "spoil" is an exceedingly interesting word in the Greek. It means, to separate you from the source of your life. Now think of that! The devil was out to spoil the Lord Jesus, therefore the Lord Jesus was out to spoil the devil, and spoiling there means, cutting clean in between the object and his base of operations, and cutting him off. Now, "lest any man spoil you through philosophy," cut you off and separate you from your true source, your true life. There is nothing more materialistic in its effect than philosophy.

Mysticism

Then there is mysticism, an indirect assault upon the spiritual mind. Oh! how subtle it is! You can have a mystical presentation and interpretation of the New Testament and of all the Scriptures, which is very beautiful. It makes a tremendous appeal to the artistic faculties and temperament. Some far-reaching, mighty religious systems owe the whole of their strength to mysticism, the mystical representation of Christian truth, appealing to the aesthetic, the artistic. Mysticism is not spirituality. But, oh, the multitudes carried away by that beautiful, artistic, mystical presentation of Christianity! It is an assault upon the spiritual mind, and this is where our peril so much lies in relation to truth; the appeal so wonderful, beautiful, and our own natural, rational response to it; the sublime ideas, these wonderful conceptions; and then grasping it like that, holding it in our aesthetic sense, in our soulful mind, and thinking we have got the truth and always talking about it, how wonderful it is, and yet there being a background of fundamental contradiction.

We are in dangerous realms. When God by His Spirit breaks clean through and reveals a thing He turns the life upside down and inside out, and you can never be the same again. Do not talk about the wonderful, sublime, beautiful things. These things have become something far, far deeper than that. You know quite well that there is a sense in which they are terrible things, marvellous but terrible. You can never contemplate God as a beautiful work of art, about which you talk sublimely. He is wonderful, He is marvellous, but, oh! He is awe-full! Those two things always go together. Mysticism is one of the devil's most cunning inventions and means of side-tracking from real, genuine spirituality. It is a blow at the spiritual mind, a substitute for it and a delusion.

Educationalists

Forgive me if I add one other of these indirect means of attack upon the prophetic function of man according to God. It is educationalism.

Now that wants guarding. Let no one think for a moment that that means that we are against education. I have not said "education"; I have said "educationalism." What I mean by that is this; the theory that you can educate people up to a Christian standard and into acceptance with God, and that education can become a way by which you come into the Kingdom of God. Today there are great Christian institutions labouring under that lie, that deception. They are out to educate, educate, educate, by slow absorption of Christian knowledge, Christian ideas and ideals, along the line of education. Thus shall we bring in the Kingdom of God, they say. And that, being what we mean by educationalism, is a blow of the devil at this very thing, spiritual-mindedness. You and I can never by searching, by study, or by education, by the development of our brains along any academic or scholastic lines enter the Kingdom of God, nor even apprehend the very minutest degree of spiritual truth. That is only possible along spiritual lines by the action of the Holy Spirit. Educationalism as such, used in relation to the things of God, is in the same category as mysticism and philosophy, and they are only other aspects of unbelief and rationalism.

I hope I am not tiring you, but I do feel that the foundations of God's people have got to be well and truly laid, so I am going on. The natural and carnal mind, at their very best, are still enmity against God. Nothing—mysticism, educationalism nor philosophy—alters the basic fact, nothing changes the nature of man as the result of the fall. Now that deals with the line of the prophet, or the spiritual mind.

THE PRIEST—We are saying that the nature and fact of the fall are continuously manifested through history in this three-fold realm.

Mixture and Loss of Distinctiveness

Then, in the second realm of the priest, where do we trace these marks of the fall? In the loss of distinctiveness between good and evil, right and wrong. "If thou shalt take the precious from the vile." You see, God demands a separation. But in Israel, when those words were uttered, there was no clear apprehension of the distinction between the two, the precious and the vile. It became so mixed up that the people in general could not discriminate between the two. And then in the upsetting of standards, calling evil good, and good evil. Do you see that at work today? It is spreading through this earth like a disease. Those old standards are being cast down, those land-marks are being removed, and evil is being called good, and good is being called evil. Why, right across the whole of the system of Communism, religion, Christianity, God, are called evil things. That is, in its intensive form. In less intensive form the same thing is going on in the world today, and in a very general way. Good is being called evil, and evil is being called good, and so the standards are being upset. The sinfulness of sin is being modified or extracted. With what object? It relates to the heart, that is, it is an easing of the way for human desires and passions. Men desire, want, and have passions for certain things, and therefore they must modify the sinfulness of those things, or extract from them—for their own satisfaction, and say they are either good or, "necessity knows no law." Do you see it is a heart matter? You are touching the priest here.

THE KING—The fall is shown continuously through history in the realm of the kingly, or dominion calling and constitution of man. Firstly, along the line of substitutes for the pure, Divine, kingly faculty of government. What are they? Despotism on the one hand, and, on the other hand, democracy. Again, autocracy and communism. These are substitutes for the true, Divine government and faculty. What do they lead to? Anarchy! What does that

represent? The overthrow, the destruction of a true Divine order of government as represented by the king.

The Spiritual Background of World Dominion

Now what have we done in this survey? We have seen that at the back of history there is a spiritual thing going on. At the back of history as seen, there is a history which is not seen, and it is in that realm back of the seen that the real issue is to be fought out. Do you understand why the Lord Jesus put back and put back all suggestions and attempts to set up a kingdom amongst men, when He came, when they would take Him by force and make Him King, and when they would talk about the Kingdom? "Dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel." They expected that the Kingdom would immediately appear, but all the time He is thrusting it away. "Art thou a king then?" "My kingdom is not of this world." Why? The issue was not in the foreground, it was behind, and He was going to deal with the whole question of the curse, in the spiritual realm. In His Cross and by His Cross He stripped off principalities and powers, He got behind everything. He starts behind things. He will finish in the foreground with the Kingdom and dominion restored, but that is where you and I are, beloved. We are in the background at present, we are not setting up a kingdom before the eyes of men, we are not out for this Kingdom of Heaven which is a seen thing that can be displayed to the eyes of men. What you and I are in is the great spiritual conflict back of everything else, the issue of which is the dominion of this universe. "Our warfare is not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, the world rulers of this darkness, the SPIRITUAL hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies." That is where our vocation is as prophets, priests and kings. It is back there that you and I have got to have the spiritual mind, the spiritual knowledge of God, by revelation, the only thing that counts. It is back there that you and I have got to stand in that righteousness which is of faith, as a mighty thing against the assaults of the enemy, having on the breastplate of righteousness. It is back there that you and I have got to reign as kings, to know what spiritual dominion over the enemy and all his forces is. That is our calling. Later it will be displayed to the universe, later on it will come into full view. When He is manifested we shall be manifested together with Him, but now it is spiritual.

THE WHOLE vocation of the Church in this dispensation is spiritual, and in the realm of principalities and powers, and, mark you, you will never be able to deal with souls of men only in so far as you know ascendancy over the power of the enemy behind. You will never be able to deal with situations which arise only in the measure in which you know how to deal with that situation behind as the work of Satan. The whole issue is one of spiritual dominion, and we are in the battle for the Throne. Blessed be God, we know the issue, but the battle is a very sore one, at times it is a terrific one. Every time there is going to be a little addition to the saints along the line of spiritual revelation, which will constitute them prophets in that spiritual sense, or an addition to the saints of righteousness by faith, which will constitute them priests unto God, those two things directly point on to the Throne, and the spiritual ascendancy of the saints and dominion; and so every time there will be a strange, a mysterious, unaccountable—unless you know the spiritual history of things—conflict to start with. Yes, before the thing begins, perhaps weeks before. The enemy knows our programmes and he knows what the issue of spiritual people coming together for a season means for him, therefore ahead he starts the battle, and we know days, sometimes weeks, before we are coming together what it is to enter into a terrific conflict, a withstanding, and every attempt is made to destroy that thing in advance, to make it impossible. You see what the issue is. It is dominion. We ought to be reaching out to see that we are going to move into whatever God is after. They that have the abundance of grace shall reign in life by that one Man, Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3 - Recovery in Christ

Reading: Psalm 8:1-6; Hebrews 2.

The effects of the fall are in two realms:

1. Inward, spiritually and morally. Our thought is particularly in connection with government. While we speak about the prophet and the priest, it is the king, the governmental side of things, which is mainly in view, and here the fall has brought about this inward loss spiritually and morally in the realm of government, authority, dominion.
2. Then outward. Of course, that is obvious, that man has lost the dominion which God gave to him and entitled him to have over the world in every kingdom.

Man has all these centuries been seeking to recover that mastery, and inasmuch as the government of this world is purely upon what is spiritual and moral, when man has attained his greatest success outwardly he finds himself a defeated man, and still incapable of governing the world. Is it not a remarkable thing that in this day when outward mastery has attained such a considerable point of advancement, the moral government of this world is so very backward? The real government and dominion is a spiritual and a moral thing before it can be wholly and fully according to God's mind.

Let us note the course of things. Man created and constituted for dominion, but conditioned. The condition, even when he is constituted for dominion, is absolute obedience and allegiance to God. Then that dominion lost in the fall, and the consequences of that.

Now we come to two other things which are fresh points from now onward.

Recovery in Christ

All that was lost in the fall in man's constitution and in man's appointment or calling or vocation, has been recovered in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to get behind that, because here we touch the magnificence of this whole matter. I said at the commencement that in the eternal intention of God the whole issue of universal dominion was centred in His Son, the Lord Jesus. It was not first of all centred in Adam. If it had been, when Adam surrendered it, it would have gone for ever, there would have been no recovery at all, but it was centred in Christ. Therefore, although the means brought in for its expression may fail, its source will remain. The Head in which it is gathered up abides, it is not lost. God's security against the total loss by the fall is His Son, and Christ is eternally God's security and ours. It was preserved in Him. These elements are eternal elements; that is why I have been so careful to stress that these are not mere phases, and these are not merely temporary or periodic things. They are eternal, they came out of the very nature of God when He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," and proceeded to do so. He 'made' with these constituents: prophet, priest and king. That is what God is—a spiritual mind, a righteous heart, a spiritual government; and He constituted man upon that basis, according to those principles in His own Eternal Being.

Man may fail, but God never fails, and so these things, being eternal, are indestructible, and they are secured for expression in the Lord Jesus, as above time and above history. Do you not see what a great revelation it was that was given to the apostle Paul about the eternity of Christ, and the eternity of God's purpose? That revelation was lifted clean out of history, clean out of the course of this world, and put back into eternity. That revelation points to and links two eternities.

The first chapter of the letter to the Colossians is matchless, putting the Son right back in eternity, and showing everything as related to Him, not as incarnate but as eternal. Man was brought in as a means to be used for this expression. What a calling! What an honour! What a glory, that man should be chosen in relation to that eternal thing which was in the very being of God, to express it and to be constituted for that by God. But man fell, and that race lost it all in Adam. But it was not lost. It was still secured in that Eternal Head; it

was still preserved as indestructible in God's Son. These things were not first in man, but in God. Man is but the means for expressing them.

Then Christ came, because God had not abandoned and was not going to abandon His intention as to the method of universally expressing that. He could have chosen angels to universally express these things. He could have made some special order other than man, but He had decided that it should be man. The Psalms and the Apostle use strange and wonderful words: "When I consider the heavens, the works of thy hands, the moon and the stars which thou hast made, what is man that thou makest mention of him, or the son of man that thou puttest him in charge" (that is the literal translation). That is God's eternal thought, intention, and even though Adam may fail, God does not abandon that thought, and so it must be recovered for man and it will be recovered for man by Man, but what a Man! The Lord Jesus came to recover—not for God, not in the Being of God, not something that God had lost out of His Being by Satan's interference—but to recover for man that which God purposed for him. Here is grace. Here is the wonder of salvation.

I think, beloved, if only we had a fuller presentation of the positive side of salvation it would not be necessary to preach hell fire to frighten people into salvation. Of course, the New Testament puts a very strong emphasis upon that, but, oh! to see what we are called *to*, what God has chosen us *unto*! Is not that an adequate motive for us to appreciate the grace of God in salvation? "So great salvation!" That is the word. It is the loss of that, which can make hell for us; and to *wake up* to what we have lost. Christ's work on the Cross was vicarious in this three-fold realm of prophet, priest and king. It was not only dealing with sin. It was that, but it was the recovery of the lost function of man. And when the Lord Jesus has accomplished His work in the Cross, and is raised by the Father from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He is there as the Representative, Prophet, Priest, and King. And then the saints through being raised together with Him, are brought into fellowship with Him in that ministry.

The Cross — the Way to the Throne

Let us take that a bit at a time. THE issue, the final issue of Christ's work on the Cross is not only that our sins have been dealt with and put away. It is ultimately and pre-eminently and all-inclusively that it is made possible for us to come back to the Throne, to come back to all that the Throne means; to be kings and priests unto God, to be restored to spiritual dominion in this universe. And when any child of God through resurrection union with the Lord Jesus is linked with Him as there at God's right hand, and comes under the government of the Holy Spirit, their education begins in the school of how to reign, how to gain spiritual dominion. That is the whole explanation of our remaining here. It explains everything that the Lord allows to come into our lives.

The Lord is perfectly able to keep every bit of trouble out of our lives, every bit of opposition, persecution, suffering, trial, to keep it all out. Have you been asking Him to do it? You are asking Him to take your crown away if you do. By it He is teaching you to reign, He is developing in you and in me spiritual and moral government. Why has He left the devil about, and his whole hosts? To teach us how to reign! Are you sitting down under him, accepting him? God's thought for you is that you should have power, authority over all the power of the enemy. That is our calling, our vocation, and our function in union with the risen and ascended and enthroned Christ. That is the top stone of the testimony of Jesus. It is to that everything else points and leads in our relation to Him. What the Lord is seeking is to possess a people who, in relation with Him as enthroned, govern spiritually now. They will govern manifestly in the universe later.

Christ's work on the Cross was primarily in relation to man's fall and lost dominion, in order to recover it, He fought a battle in the Cross. It was not just meeting wrong, it was not only dealing with the fact of sin. This was not an abstract thing, to set up a standard of morality,

an ideal for life. It was meeting hell; it was a conflict with the whole range of those principalities and powers, those spiritual intelligent forces which had wrested the dominion from man, and that dominion had to be restored. It was done in the Cross of the Lord Jesus, and it is in the hands of Christ, now risen and ascended: "All authority has been given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Fallen Man Cannot Reign

Now we must go back a bit. The fallen—now known as the natural—man can never occupy the Throne nor have dominion. He, as such, is fully and finally set aside. He has sought to exercise kingship. The devil has tried to make him a king: "All these will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." While that was said to Christ, it represents a principle of Satanic effort from the beginning. The devil has always followed that line in trying to make men kings without God, and the full expression of that effort of his will be Anti-Christ, Super-man; man representing universal government, control, authority, apart from God. But, as history has proved, and will prove right to the end, even Anti-Christ, that fallen or natural man, even Satanically energised, cannot have dominion according to God's thought. God has taken pains to make that clear. His inability to have dominion has all the way through been exhibited by God. His unfitness has been displayed. Oh! how God has, as it seems, gone out of His way to show man's inability in himself to reach any Divine standard.

We must keep to this one point of dominion, but look at the long dispensation of law. Did not God know right at the beginning when He gave the law what the end would be? Being God, He knew that the end of the dispensation of the law would be utter failure, because He knew man, and yet He gave the law. He gave the law deliberately, knowing full well what the end of it would be. Then, you say, if God knew that the end would be failure, why did God do it? God did it in order that man might come to know himself, his inability. It has taken centuries of history in man's experience to bring him to the place where he knows that this thing is not in him. And so God paves the way for His Son. Somehow or other the Lord has to bring that home to us, with a period of experience, before we fully accept it. We might take it mentally, and say we agreed with it, but then God puts us into the place for a few months where we are tested out, and the end of that severe test is, Lord, if you do not do this thing it will never be done! Put me up against the devil and see how much good I am! Put me up against the law and see if I can keep it! No! it is not in man. That is the verdict. God has demonstrated that through long periods of practical history, based upon that very fact. And we have outstanding illustrations of it.

An Historic Example

We might take one example in the particular realm in which we are moving, as to dominion. Look at Saul, the king. He is a good illustration. Saul humanly and naturally is a very fine specimen. When they looked at Saul they saw that he was head and shoulders above any other man in Israel, and the naturally minded acclaimed Saul a magnificent specimen of what a king ought to be, and they shouted, "God save the king." Well, that is man at his best. Now he has come to the throne. How will it work out? I know that there is a problem as to the anointing of Saul, that God anointed him to be king, and I want you to recognise a difference. There is always a big difference between God's sovereignty and God's grace, or between common grace and saving grace. God acted in sovereignty over Saul, in what we call "common grace." God is Sovereign of this universe, and He can do as He likes, and within the compass, the range or realm of His sovereignty He operates in common grace, that is, what He does in sovereignty is to work in a general way toward His ultimate end, in order to bring in what is according to His mind. That is common grace. Christ is governing this whole thing, and His government is in common grace. The end will be to the glory of God, the end will be that Christ comes back into His own. That is common grace.

Saving grace is quite another thing. It is in the universe at large that sovereignty operates and common grace is at work, but it is only amongst the saints that saving grace is at work. I am touching Saul; the problem of his anointing. In the sovereignty of God and in the common grace of God he was anointed at the command of God. How will this common grace in sovereignty turn out? It will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the natural man at his best cannot govern, and when you have come to that conclusion you have opened the way for saving grace. Do you see that? That is, you have cleared the way for God's king when you have got man's king out of the way, but you will never have a way for God's king until man has tried and failed. That is the nature of things, that you are never prepared to have God's thought until your own thought has broken down. That is how this world is in the fall. God will never get a chance until all other chances have been tried out by man, but that is the common grace of God. He lets them try it out, with a view to establishing His own thought eventually. There is no question about it when you get there. You will say, with a good deal of experience, I have come to the place where I have tried everything else and it has failed, but this is it. If this had come first I might have had something in the background, something up my sleeve.

And so God, in common grace and sovereignty allows Saul to be anointed as a very bright specimen of men. And it is not very long before this natural man at his best is shown to be quite incapable of ruling. He represents the trial of the natural man in relation to government, his unfitness to rule is very soon manifested. He is given a few tests, and what comes out? The word of the Lord through Samuel is: "I remember that which Amalek did to Israel." "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy..." He is put to the test, as to whether he will govern, whether he is fit to govern. Spiritual government is conditioned by absolute obedience and allegiance to God. That is the principle of spiritual government. Now he is being tried on that principle. You know the result. He did not utterly destroy Amalek, he spared the best of the flock and the herd. He excused himself by saying that he spared the best of the flock and the herd for sacrifice, but Samuel said: "...to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." And Saul lost his office before God because he had proved that spiritually he was unfit to hold it, that is, he could not keep the kingship because he was not constituted for it.

The Kind to Reign

Who is the man that will reign? It is significant to notice that it was for forty years that Saul kept the name of king. Spiritually he had never held the position, but even under God's recognition in that realm he had only held it for three years, and then thirty-seven years he was spiritually and morally out of that realm altogether. But he kept the official title for another thirty-seven years, making forty years in all. Forty is always a time of probation, and here is the natural man at his best, proving his unfitness to reign throughout a perfect period of testing. That is an illustration, a type. Now the man who will reign, who is he? I will not take a type at this point, but will take the principles. He is the one who is joined to the Lord inwardly. There is the Lord Jesus exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on High, a Prince and a Saviour. Who will reign? Who will come to spiritual dominion? Those who are joined to Him inwardly. Cover the whole range again—the prophet, the priest and the king. We have said that these all go together, and form a whole, and the two lead to the other, the third, the throne.

The Prophet

The Prophet leading to the throne. What is that spiritually in the New Testament? It is simply this, "We have the mind of Christ." The prophetic function is the spiritual mind. The spiritual mind is related to the throne, it leads on to the Throne, and that is what Paul meant when he said, "We have the mind of Christ." "To be spiritually minded is life..." Now, go back to your New Testament with the spiritual mind in your thought, and you will see

that it is a feature of the Throne, it brings you to a place of spiritual ascendancy. Let us put that quite simply. Who are the people who will really be in the place of advantage, of spiritual power, who will be looked up to? Amongst men they may be the weakest, the most foolish, nothing to look at; everything that man would set aside and ignore, and yet [there is] something about them that demands attention, something about them that cannot be ignored, something to be reckoned with. You have to say, there is something about them, and when they speak there is something in what they say, and it comes to pass, it is true, you cannot get away from it, you cannot close your eyes to it. What is it? They know the Lord. They have a spiritual knowledge of the Lord. Despise them if you will amongst men, but that thing is something dominant spiritually, and you have to bow to it. There is the prophet, the spiritual mind. The spiritual mind represents something of the Throne, it relates to the Throne.

The Priest

It is a matter of the heart, righteousness, or that abandoning of the heart to what God desires. It is a quality, but it is a mighty quality. Righteousness is a strong thing, it is always represented as a strong thing in the Word of God. It is the brass, and brass is a very powerful thing. You cannot resist brass, the fire cannot overcome the brass, the altar of whole burnt offering is of brass, and the fire is kept burning perpetually. It is righteousness, and there is something about real righteousness of the heart which speaks of the Throne. It is a governing thing.

Now you see that these two things represent spiritual links with the Lord Jesus inwardly.

The King

He is King there, because He was so utterly abandoned to God's will. Who are those who reign? Those who are one with Him in the will of God, who have the Spirit of Christ in them, consuming them unto the will of God! Find the men and the women who are wholly, utterly in the will of God, and you cannot do anything with those men and those women. On the plain of nature they may be nothing, but they are a dominating factor in the spiritual realm, and you know quite well that you cannot turn those lives round as you like, they are in the will of God and they govern spiritually, morally. It is the Lord Jesus in what He is as Prophet, Priest and King, exercising Himself, expressing Himself in and through the saints spiritually.

Spiritual Dominion is Universal

It is not merely in this world of flesh and blood. What can the devil do with a man or woman who knows the Lord? What can the powers of darkness do with a man or woman who has the righteousness of Christ as a breastplate over the heart? What can the adversary do with a man or woman who is utterly bound by the will of God? What can he do with the Lord Jesus? When we come into that position, we reign in the spiritual realm. If you are going to try and find some defence against the enemy as the Accuser in yourself, as to your goodness, well, the Lord has taken a big lump of history to prove that that cannot be done and in the end man is hopeless. Are you still trying to find some good with which to beat the devil? You had better give it all up. Do not go on for he will worst you, he will pulverise you, in the end you will be good for nothing. The sooner you stand with both feet on what Christ is there for you, the sooner you are coming into spiritual dominion over the devil. Then you will be in the place of, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper" — even the Accuser — "and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." That is an impregnable position against the devil. It is the way of the Throne, it is dominion!

Reigning by Christ

Now, this man, to reign, is reconstituted by Christ. That is, that constitution for government in the new creation is the Holy Spirit making Christ over to the believer. We are reconstituted, created anew, and we are created anew for this ultimate purpose — dominion. It is not going to be office. Do not get an external mentality about reigning on thrones later on. This thing is intensely real as a spiritual thing. The throne, the crown, the dominion, is fundamentally and preeminently spiritual, and we are to be constituted for it, not appointed to it, and we are constituted for it by Christ. You see what I said at the beginning, that out from what God was, there came into man that which constituted him for dominion. Now in the new creation, out from what Christ is as in the Throne there is brought by the Holy Spirit the constituents for dominion. "Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inward man." That is a constituent of Christ to make us govern. The Holy Spirit taking of His things and revealing them unto us. That is spiritual revelation, to bring us into a governing position spiritually, the Holy Spirit making good for us, to us, His righteousness, the righteousness which is of God by faith. That brings you to the throne, dominion over the power of the enemy. It is a very real thing, it is not just a picture. That is what is going on in us. It is simply that we are being constituted according to Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. Those things which are in Christ there, are being imparted to us, and developed in us, and what we have to do day by day and hour by hour is to draw upon Christ, in order to maintain our position of spiritual ascendancy.

Am I weak? That is not the criterion. He is strong, and by faith I reach out to make His strength perfect in my weakness. Am I foolish? Am I in a quandary? That is not the thing. He is perfect wisdom, made unto us from God, wisdom; and therefore I take from Him the wisdom that He is, to bring me up out of this position. It is what Christ is made over to us, constituting us to govern, and it will all be a matter of the measure of Christ as to how much we reign. The rank that we are going to hold in the coming universal reign of the Lord Jesus will just be the measure of Christ that we have. Let the Lord have a large place, live on Him, live out from Him, draw upon Him, make Him your everything. Learn day by day how to appropriate Christ by faith, how to repudiate what you are in yourself, and make what He is everything to you. That is the way of victory. Circling around yourself, looking into yourself, trying to find something; all that is simply grieving God, it is saying, in effect, to the Lord, 'Your Christ is not what You have said He is'. We must not malign God by bringing up our own natural state, continually holding it in view and hoping for something from it. We have got to learn to live on Him, the Christ of God. *There is no other way of deliverance.* Christ *is* the way, not has just made the way. He *is* the way, and as we apprehend Christ we shall move on in triumph, in victory.

He is the King. We have to live by His Kingliness, in dominion over every kind of force that would tyrannise here on this earth. The Lord give us to believe that the natural man has been set aside, and not to bother too much about him, not to take him so much into account in trying to find, hoping to find, something good in him. He is set aside and God has demonstrated that he is worthless through long generations, he cannot reign. But there is One Who can reign, and because of Him we can reign in life by that One Man, Christ Jesus.

Chapter 4 - The Special Vow

Reading: Leviticus 27; 2 Kings 9:1-7,16-20; 10:11,30.

The matter with which the Lord has been and is engaging us is that of the battle for the Throne, as being the fundamental and the final issue of the history of this world. All the Lord's people are bound up with that issue, and it relates to them immediately. While, as we shall see, it is all in Christ, yet it is a matter for the saints in Christ, the dominion of this universe as God's intention from the beginning.

Utterness for the Lord

Within that compass there is a specific word which is in a measure detached from the sequence of our meditations, but occupies a place perhaps of particular emphasis. It has come to me with very considerable force that the Lord would have a word said on utterness for the Lord. And in that connection the two passages of scripture—Leviticus 27 and 2 Kings 9 and 10—are given. Reverting to the former (Leviticus 27) without staying for a detailed analysis or exposition, I will remind you of the three things contained therein. These three things represent three aspects of consecration. There is that aspect of consecration which has to do with the firstborn and the tithes. You will notice that certain quite definite and particular things were said in connection with the firstborn and the tithes, and that they stood in a sphere by themselves. The firstborn and tithes were the Lord's by right. They were a token and a testimony of and to the rights of God to have the first place in the life of His people, so that the firstborn was the Lord's, and the tithe, which was the first fruit, a tenth of all, and the first tenth, spoke of God having first place as His right in the life of His people. That is established, and nothing can touch that or interfere with it. There is no option about that. It is not optional whether the Lord has first place in your life and mine; He demands it, it is His right.

The second aspect was that of devoted things. The devoted things were those things which were set apart as being entirely beyond man's option or question or judgment, as settled by God, wholly and utterly for Himself, sometimes to be accepted by Him and sometimes to be completely destroyed out of His sight. All the cities of Canaan were devoted to the Lord, and had to be utterly destroyed. Achan took of the devoted thing and died. Now that law is written in this chapter in Leviticus. If a man interferes with the devoted thing the penalty is death. So that the devoted things were the Lord's by demand, and the firstborn and the tithes were the Lord's by *right*.

The Special Vow

The third thing in this chapter, and that with which the chapter commences and is mainly occupied, is special vows. It is that to which we are giving attention. There is no suggestion of right, and no suggestion of demand. Here, while the first and the second (the firstborn and tithes, and the devoted things) were legal, a matter of law, this question of special vows was voluntary. No order is made, it is simply "When a man makes a special vow..." Then certain provisions are made in connection with this special vow. Now I want it to be very clearly understood that this is dealing with the Lord's people *as* the Lord's people. This represents something within the company of the people of God. This has nothing whatever to do with salvation. Salvation is dealt with on an entirely different basis. In the matter of atonement every man had to bring his half shekel of silver, and the rich were not allowed to bring more and the poor were not allowed to bring less. Rich and poor were reduced to one level. There are no discriminations or distinctions or respectings of persons in the matter of atonement, we are all on a common level. Not one is better nor worse than the other, and the half shekel represents the common level of all men in sin, needing salvation through the precious Blood. That is one thing. This is quite another. This has to do with what goes on in the midst of the redeemed people of God.

Now we come to this special vow, and ask what it represents. It represents a peculiar and particular movement of the heart toward God. It speaks of a specific devotion to the Lord. No demand, no command, the law does not touch it, not even the law of being saved, but it is altogether a voluntary thing of spontaneous heart movement toward the Lord. It does not affect the matter of grace at all. It is not something which puts grace on one side and introduces merit. Nothing of merit is mentioned in the connection, so that it is not something in order to get some special favour, it is just a pure, an altogether pure, crystal clear outgoing of heart to the Lord, without any ulterior motive, and without any special demand as such from God's side. A special vow!

But it does have an effect, and the effect which it has is to bring the Lord into the life in a larger measure. Take the simple illustration of the chapter. A man is moved in love and devotion toward the Lord, and to put that inward heart movement into some tangible form of expression he will bring a field and dedicate that field to the Lord, and so now that field is the Lord's in a special way; that field belongs to the Lord, and everything that that field produces is for the Lord. Or it may be from his cattle. It might be one of the other things mentioned. But inasmuch as that has not been demanded, and inasmuch as he is not seeking something by way of reward from the Lord, do you not think that the Lord comes into the sphere of that man's life and interests in a new way; and the Lord, as it were, encamps upon that field, so that the opening of the heart is really opening the door for the Lord to have a larger place in the life? How can the Lord have a larger place in our lives? Along the line of what is signified by the special vow. We shall see as we go on what that means. The Lord comes in larger measure into the life in this way.

It has this effect. It brings life over on to the positive side. He is the Lord's, he belongs to the Lord, he is redeemed by precious Blood, he is serving the Lord. But this brings his whole life into the positive realm with the Lord, in a peculiar way. A man like this does not ask, how much must I do? Is that really necessary? Am I under an obligation to do that? Must I do that? While that may not be actually expressed in words, it is the state of the heart or mind of many of the Lord's children. They will argue, they will reason, Is that really necessary? Are we really expected to do that? Must we take such and such a course? Can we not be the Lord's and enjoy the Lord and do the Lord's work and be used of the Lord without that? That is the negative line! You may be the Lord's, there may be no question as to your belonging to the Lord and yet you are in that state of mind where you have got to have a real battle on this question and that question and some other question in order to get through to the will of God. That is all on the negative side. This special vow represents the positive side, where it is not, How much MUST we do? Can we serve the Lord and still do so-and-so, be in this and in that, and go here and go there? The question for the man whose heart is after this kind is: Cannot the Lord have very much more if we take this course and leave that and that, and count that out and forsake that and abandon that? If so, that is the course for me. It is positive all the time. That is the special vow. What is the motivating object? The Lord! You see, it is not special favour, blessing, what we can get in return for special devotion; and, on the other hand, it is not because it is demanded. It is just the Lord. There is no merit. It does not represent virtue, it is simply the Lord. Because the man's heart is going out wholly to the Lord he does not say, Just how far MUST I go? He says, just how far CAN I go? You see the difference. It makes a lot of difference, and you can always tell the difference between lives which are on the different sides of that line. On the one side it is urge, exhortation, admonition, nursing, encouraging, always having to watch susceptibilities. On the other hand they are going on, the Lord is their objective, and the heart is set upon Him, and they never raise the question as to whether it is a command. They see the Lord in their own hearts; He is the objective and they are running after Him.

Utterness, a Factor in Reigning

Now, coming to the thing that is being brought before us, let us notice that this is a principle which relates to the Throne. We are seeing that the goal which God has fixed for His people is the Throne. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." That always was the goal for the Lord's people in His will. There will be multitudes of His own people who will not reach it, but will be distanced from the Throne; saved, but not with Him in the Throne. It is conditional, but to reign with Him for ever and ever is our high calling, the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is the Throne that is in view, and this principle of the special vow is the principle by which we shall come to the Throne. It relates to the Throne.

Hurriedly pass your eye over the history of Israel in relation to the Throne of Israel, and see how true in type and illustration this is. David stands almost in solitary isolation as Israel's king. Solomon ran a second, but did not finish the course. David did. He stumbled at times, but he finished the course. David therefore, stands alone as THE expression of God's thought as far as it can be found in sinful man—and we are only dealing with types, which altogether fall short of the Antitype. As far as it is possible in that realm, on that level, David represents God's thought of government, of kingship. It was not merit. In the great day of David's height of power and success the Lord came through the prophet and said to him: "I took thee from the sheep-fold, from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be prince over my people, over Israel." Reminded him of his humble origin and told him it was no merit, nothing to do with him, it was with God. But what did the Lord say, not to David but to someone else about him? "I have found me David, a man after my own heart, who shall do all my *pleasure*." You will see the difference. The firstborn and the tithes are God's rights, the devoted things are God's demands; the special vow is God's delight, God's pleasure.

Go through David's life as we have it in his Psalms, and what is the note that is constantly running throughout? It is the note of David's delight in the Lord. How he delights in his God! It is not the note of compulsion, and it is not the note of reward. It is the note of spontaneous outgoing of heart in worship to the Lord for His own sake. The Lord had captured the heart of David. That is why the Lord stood by David, even through his mistakes and his faults. "The Lord looketh on the heart." That was the word said to Samuel when selection was made amongst the sons of Jesse. What the Lord had seen as He looked into the heart of David was his delight in the Lord, and He chose him. A heart matter. David would not do because the Lord demanded, and David would not do because the Lord bribed him. David would do because he loved the Lord, and David's cry is: "Love the Lord all his people." But over against David, the majority of the nineteen kings of Israel, and then the nineteen kings of Judah, and what have you in contrast?

Take Saul. The heart of Saul found its final uncovering and was shown, displayed, disclosed in 1 Samuel 15, in the case of Amalek. "Go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy," said the Lord. "I have marked that which Amalek did to Israel... now go... and utterly destroy." You know what Saul did. He compromised, spared the best of the flocks and the herds, and when Samuel came Saul tried as we would say, to bluff Samuel: "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord." "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears?" Betrayed, he must find some other way out. "The people spared the best of the sheep." Blaming it on to someone else. A guilty conscience must always find a scapegoat. Yes, but he lost his throne. Samuel said to him, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than you." You see, the throne, for its maintenance, demands a heart that is utter for God without compromise, without reservation, without excuse, without hedging, without trying to deceive God or man; a heart that is utter for God. We may deceive one another, we may tell one another that we belong to the Lord, and we are out for the Lord, and the Lord's best; but God knows our heart. God knows, and it is Him with whom we have to do. When we want to get certain things, realise certain desires of ours, we can make professions, and in so doing we may deceive men, but God knows.

Our calling, our high calling—not our salvation—our high calling for its realisation, attainment, demands the principle of the special vow; that is, a heart that delights in the Lord. In our passage in 2 Kings 9 we read about Jehu. Why did we read about Jehu? Not because Jehu is a perfect example, but he does introduce the principle. Where was Ahab before the Lord? What a poor specimen of a king; and because of the compromise of Ahab through his wife, Jezebel, by whom he was linked with the world (Jezebel, like all women in

the Bible, represents a principle—and Jezebel represents the principle of a spiritual link with a world which is outside of God's covenant), Ahab had brought this awful state into Israel, and God's king was not possible of realisation. The throne was shaken, the government of God as expressed amongst His people was destroyed in its purity, its holiness, its completeness. How did the Lord react to the consequences of Ahab's compromising rule? Through an Elisha and a Jehu. While we grieve to note a breakdown at a point in Jehu's life, that he was one of those who did not follow through, we cannot read about Jehu without feeling that this man did things thoroughly. There is no compromise, at any rate, about Jehu. Jehu said, "Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much," and do you know how he did it? He had all the prophets of Baal together in Baal's temple, and then shut the door, and that was the end of Baal's prophets. But you notice it is related to the throne, and the point is this, *utterness for God is a law and principle of reigning with God*. Jehu, at that time at least, represents an utterness of heart for the Lord. He was raised up and anointed in order to wipe out the stain and avenge the sins of Ahab, a very thorough work.

We could go over many of the other kings. Some of them reached a point of devotion to the Lord which was very excellent—Hezekiah and others. They did great things for the Lord, they brought back the Lord in a very large measure to His rightful place, they re-established the order of the Lord, and up to that point they represent the coming back of the government of God in a larger measure of purity and power, and that part of their lives was marked by Divine approval, but none of them went right through. Even those who went so far had this said of them: "...but he removed not the high places." There is just a stopping short, and there they broke down and so the full expression of Divine kingship was not given. If only they had gone all the way! But they did not go all the way, and therefore there was a limit put to the expression of Divine government.

I think I have said enough to at least illustrate the point. The Throne is in view; we are called to that; to reign with Him. The realisation of that is by the principle of the special vow, a heart wholly and utterly for the Lord. It is marvellous what you can do when your heart is in a thing. If your heart is not there you will have to be reasoned with, argued with, and you will have all sorts of problems and always be tied up in your problems; but once you get your heart over and say, it does not matter, be the mountains as high as heaven, I am going through with God; it is marvellous how you can solve your problems and get over your difficulties.

Now Paul was one of those we have had in the back of our minds. Look at Philippians 3:10: "That I may know him..." "I count all things but loss, as refuse, that I may be found in him." "I press toward the mark of the prize of the upward calling..." "If by any means I may attain unto the out-resurrection." What is this but a heart in the spirit of the special vow, a devotion to the Lord. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." Is there any ulterior motive? "...the fellowship of his sufferings, being made comformable unto his death." No, this is pure devotion to the Lord. It is true that the Throne is the goal and the prize, but it is the heart set upon the Lord. It is the overcomer. Now look at Leviticus 27. Is there any suggestion of merit there? Is there any suggestion of reward? What is it then? It is sheer delight in the Lord. Who is the overcomer in the book of the Revelation? He is the one who wipes out a "but," that is all. "I know thy works... thy labour and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men..." Yes, that is all right, "but" you have got a reservation, and all that is good does not make it possible for Me to pass over that "but," and when you have pointed out all that is right, "...I have this against thee..." The overcomer says that "but" must go. He wipes out the "but". "To him that overcometh..." What? The "but"! The man whose heart is set for God's fullest satisfaction, who delights himself in the Lord. There is no question of merit, it is all grace, it is the Blood of Christ. We are not striving to get some special favour from God, we are pressing on because the grace of God is such a wonderful thing to us. It is all of grace, and

no one knows better than the overcomers how much they are dependent upon the grace of God.

We must close by pointing out again the only thing that justifies all this. It is Christ. Leviticus 27 is simply a typical unveiling of the Lord Jesus. All those aspects are Christ. If it is the firstborn, it is Christ: "the Firstborn among many brethren." God's by right. If it is the firstfruits, it is Christ. Is it the devoted thing? Then, being made sin for us, He Who knew no sin must be destroyed from the presence of God. Is it a holy thing unto the Lord, then He will offer Himself without spot unto God, the whole burnt offering. Is it the special vow? "I delight always to do thy will, O God." That is going the second mile. Not the necessity merely of atonement, not the obligation to die: "I lay it down of myself." It is Christ, giving voluntarily to the will of God. How far we go with the Lord will declare how much of Christ we have in our hearts, how much the spirit of Christ is in us, which says "I delight."

May the Lord find us a people of the special vow. We may be challenged on this. Thank God that there are so many whose delight is in the Lord, and I do not want to be found driving you, but I do feel that we need just to have these matters brought to us, and to be shown the way by which the Lord is going to realise His fullest objective in the saints, to bring them to the Throne, that there may be found in their hearts the spirit of His Son in fullness, which says: "I delight," that makes a special vow, voluntarily; not by demand or command, or because God has the right to it, but because the heart is wholly set upon the Lord's pleasure. May that be the governing law of our lives.