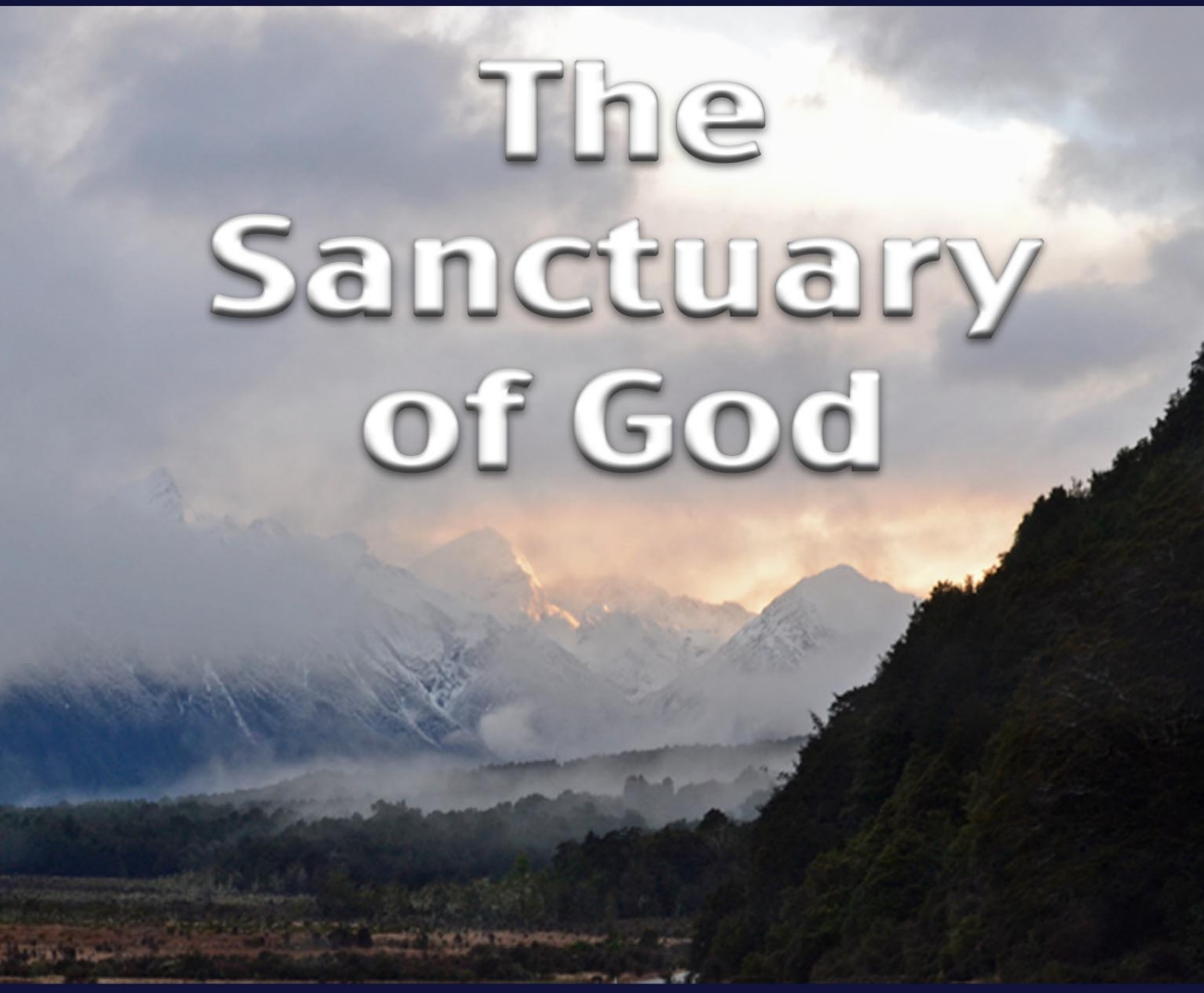
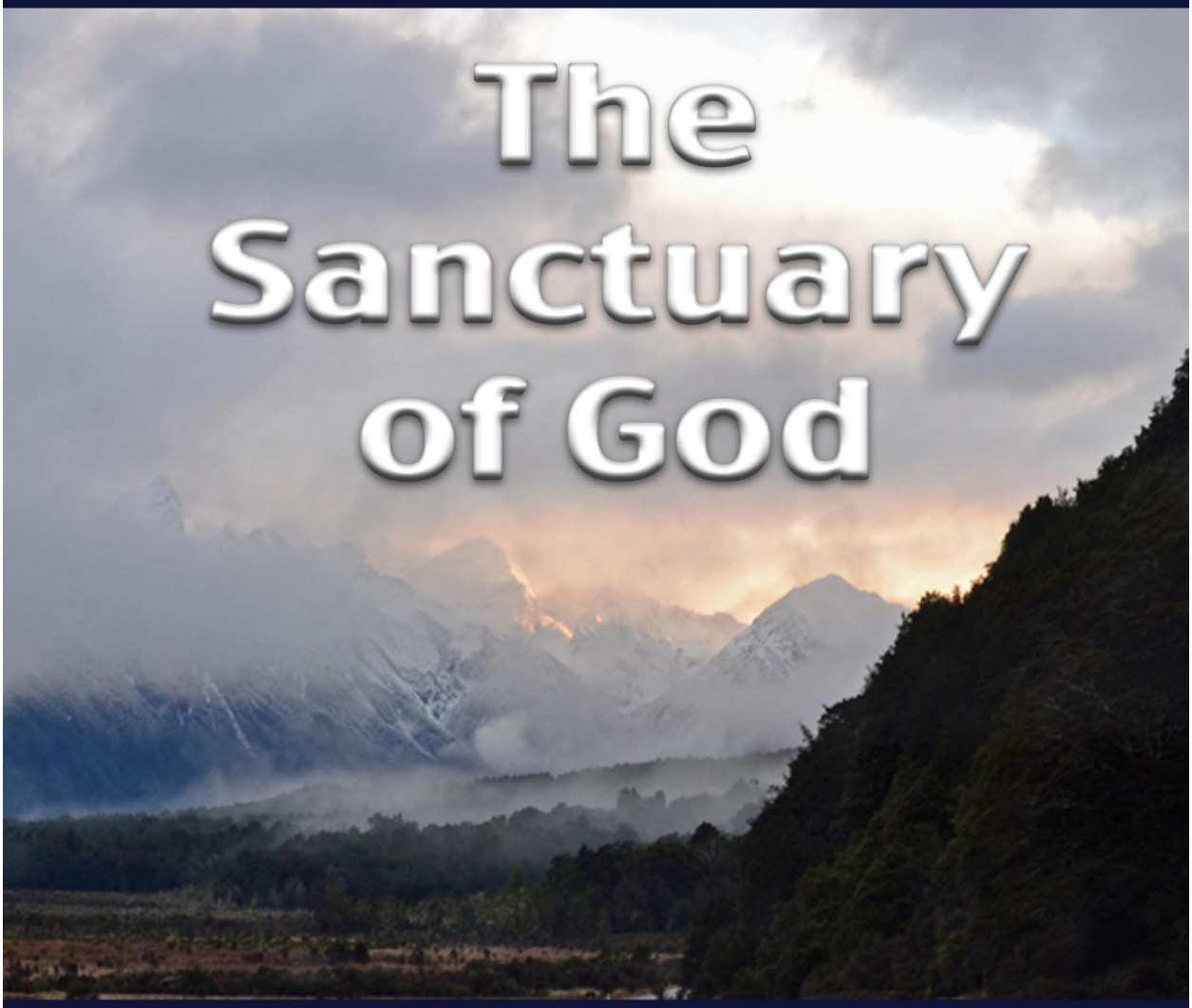
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The Sanctuary of God

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The Sanctuary of God

by T. Austin-Sparks

A Précis of Messages Given in Conference.
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Chapter 1 - God's Eternal Purpose in Relation to His House

Reading: Exodus 25:8-9; 40:34-35; Isaiah 6:1; 2 Chron. 7:1; Acts 2:1-3; Ephes. 1:4-6,11-12; 2:21-22; Hebrews 3:1-6.

The governing thought in these passages is that of eternal purpose. Then we are led by that thought to something which includes many other things, and affects many other things, but which comprehensively is the Sanctuary of God or God's House.

Creation began outside this world. There was a created order which was heavenly, and then there came the created order of this "Kosmos" (something bigger than the earth), and God's intention was that the creation should come to a knowledge of Him and have fellowship with Him. God is revealed as desiring fellowship with His creation. All God's great thoughts are gathered into this idea of a Sanctuary in which He may dwell. That governs things from eternity, and the creative activities of God were with that end in view.

We know what transpired. Foreign elements which excluded Him came into His creation.

An Elect Line

Then God laid His hand upon a chosen line.

The book of Genesis gives us that elect line in individuals, who themselves are not perfect, but who were raised up to express some feature that is of God, and when all the men are put together you have a collection of features which, when brought to perfection, show us one Man, Jesus Christ. So that the Lord was foreshadowing a perfect Man by a certain number of features which were represented by a number of men.

Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, are imperfect men, but there is some feature in them which is of God. For instance, Abraham was a man of faith, and

God is the God of the man of faith.

So God shows us step by step in the features which these men embodied what will ultimately be the character of a vessel in which God dwells.

The Lord Jesus is the full embodiment of those excellencies brought to perfection. God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in a way in which He could never be the God and Father of any other man.

An Elect Race

In Exodus you have an elect people. Although poor specimens in themselves, they represent corporately those principles of their fathers.

A Priestly Sanctuary

Then God says, "Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them". This is the realm of types and figures. God did not, even with Israel, get His sanctuary in the way in which He first thought of dwelling among men.

When Moses had made all things according to the pattern, the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.

God's sanctuary is intended to be a priestly sanctuary, and priestliness in the House of God is a very widely, and richly, and fully-developed truth in the Word of God.

A Kingly House

You pass into the kingly period, and you have the temple. This also is made according to a pattern in revelation, and when perfected you have, in the presence of the king, the glory of Jehovah filling the House.

A Prophetic Ministry

With Isaiah you see the Lord high and lifted up, seated upon a throne, His train filling the temple. This is God's speaking in and through man as related to the House of God. When God fills His House, He is known in His House by representation; He speaks. That is the prophetic principle.

A State of Things According to God's Thought

We pass over to the New Testament, and look at Acts 2. Here is a company of believers, standing on the ground of Christ crucified, buried, risen, exalted and the glory of the Lord fills the House. Pentecost is the counterpart of these things that we have in the Old Testament. Here you have the House of God really coming into realisation. God is there in glory, power, love, fellowship - shall we say, in eating and drinking, because that is a feature of the House. Moses went up into the mount with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy of the elders, "and they did eat and drink in the mount". The kingly feature comes in at Hebron where David was made king, and it says that they did eat and drink together three days. Pentecost was a real feast time, and was certainly marked by fellowship. It was because God was in the midst.

The last picture of the Church in the New Testament is the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, having the glory of God.

In between Pentecost and that last scene in the book of Revelation you have "Hebrews", in which this declaration is made: "...whose house are we..." The believers form the House of God.

"...Christ as a Son over God's house, whose house are we, if we hold fast". God's dwelling in a house is conditional. He cannot dwell in a house where man dwells.

When the tabernacle was completed and the glory of Jehovah filled it, Moses could not go in.

When the glory of the Lord filled the temple, the priests could not go in.

When the Holy Ghost came at Pentecost, Ananias and Sapphira could not come in.

The heavenly purpose is the sanctuary, but seeing now that this sanctuary can only be realised through redemption, the sanctuary must embody redemptive features. So in Ephesians there are two things: (1) The thought of the eternal, counsels of God which maintain the heavenly line: (2) Redemption through His Blood which is a dip down in order to get back to God's heavenly line.

God's eternal purpose, related to a sanctuary, foreshadowed in the Old Testament, realised in some measure in the New Testament, has yet to be perfected and completed. Everything since the fall is working to exclude God from His creation. Principalities and powers, the world rulers, the spiritual hosts of wickedness, are set against the Lord having a place. He is brought in by there being that which corresponds to His thought in which He can take up His residence. 'Wheresoever two or three are gathered into my name, there am I in the midst...' Two or three gathered in the Name of Jesus are gathered into the values represented by that Name, and God in Christ is manifested in that sanctuary. God's thought as to dwelling is not a limited thing. Solomon's prayer was for Israel, but also related to "the stranger which is not of thy people..." "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples". The House of God ultimately is to be universal.

Divine Order in the House

The House of God is that in which Divine order obtains, about which we shall speak later.

Divine Worship in the House

The House of God is that in which Divine worship goes on, in which the "worth-ship" is brought back to God. Pharaoh set the children of Israel to build *him* cities, to bring the "worth-ship" of their lives to him. Satan sought to get Jesus to give the "worth-ship" to him. That shows how intensely Satan's heart is set upon being the object of universal worship.

The Lord Jesus God's Sanctuary

"Destroy this sanctuary and in three days I will raise it up." "This is my beloved Son, in whom (not only with whom) I am well pleased". At last God has one in whom He can be pleased. There never had been a man like that before. Jesus is set forth as a wonderful revelation of what God's House is, ordered according to heaven, in which God is worshipped. We mark Him, watch Him, and learn what God's eternal thought is, and then - wonder of wonders! - we are told that we are temples of the Holy Ghost individually, and then that we are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit. This, of course, can only be as Christ, God's sanctuary, dwells in our hearts, and He becomes the vessel of the Holy Ghost

within us.

Chapter 2 - Heavenly Government

Hebrews 3:1,6; 4:14; 6:4-5; 8:1-2,5; 9:23-24; 11:16; 12:22-26.

There is that in heaven which is God's perfect thought. Man since the fall is an exile from heaven, so that heaven must govern if there is to be anything here which is according to God's mind for God to dwell in.

The government of the heavens means:

(a) Man by Nature is Excluded

"Holding fast our boldness... firm unto the end", means going on a heavenly path, persisting on the level of the heavenlies as "partners in a heavenly calling". As we go on we are more and more excluded in what we are by nature. Wherever God's dwelling place is mentioned in the Old Testament there is always associated with it the aspect of heavenly government, that man has to be made suitable for God to dwell there.

Bethel. The House of God came in with Jacob very early in his career, but he could not stay there. He called the place Bethel because he met God there, but he took hold of Divine things for himself, and therefore that could not be for him God's abiding place. God chastened this son whom he had received (Hebrews 12) for twenty years, and then he could come back to Bethel and pour out a drink-offering - that which is for God's pleasure.

The Tabernacle. In relation to service every precaution was taken against man appearing before God in his natural state. There were no steps to the altar, but an incline, so that no flesh of the priest should appear; and when going into the sanctuary there was rigid provision for the covering of all that suggested man by nature.

The Temple. The same was true of the temple. Wherever you come upon the House of God precautions are taken by the Lord against man's flesh, so that man comes in only in Christ by the Spirit under the anointing.

In the New Testament this was carried out in a spiritual way very stringently and drastically. Ananias and Sapphira associated themselves with the pure, true, holy, spiritual House of God in another spirit, and the Holy Ghost smote them, setting an example of the sure judgment that rests upon all flesh that dares to come into touch with that which is of God, and where God is.

(b) Man in Christ is Brought in

The House of God is constituted of men. They are still human and still mortal, yet heaven brings man in and transcends the human limitations, inasmuch as he has no standing in himself. The House is constituted of what we are in Christ, not of what we are in ourselves, and the measure of Christ is an important factor.

(c) Heavenly Qualifications

When man is dealt with by the Cross, so that he recognises that he cannot, and accepts that he cannot and that he must not try, then heaven comes in to qualify for this heavenly purpose. Heaven governs in two ways for qualification: (1) By giving a spiritual faculty; (2) By giving that upon which the spiritual faculty can work. The faculties are given in new birth, and then the Lord shows Himself, reveals Himself, and His heavenly things, so that we grow by using heavenly faculties upon heavenly things.

The heavens govern where God's purpose is concerned, to see that things are heavenly, and therefore there will be a steady breaking down of all that is merely natural ability, or cleverness, or facility in handling spiritual things, so that what relates to God's purpose has to come from God to us. "The second man is the Lord from *heaven"*. It is the inclusive governing factor. Mark, again, the phrase, "The Holy Ghost sent down from *heaven*". That means that what is being done and said is in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

To counter God's end the method of the enemy is to counter God's means. So he has ever sought to relate things to earth and in that way to nullify what is of God.

There are laws of heaven, there is an order of God's House, and the government must be from heaven. Our proximity upsets the balance of heavenly things. We must stand back.

Chapter 3 - The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Gal. 1:12; 2:2; Rev. 1:1; Ephes. 1:17; 3:3; Ephes. 1:10; Col. 1:28.

A literal translation of Gal. 1:12 is: "...nor was I taught it but through Jesus Christ revelation". That is a key to much that is said by Paul. It is the truth which lies behind the New Testament. All things are summed up *in* Jesus Christ, and all the fulness dwells in Him.

When God showed Moses the pattern in the mount, He was not showing a number of things as such, but from His standpoint was showing Christ to Moses. All the things shown stand to represent what He is in fulness. The whole life of Israel from centre to circumference was governed by a revelation of Jesus.

The answer to every question is not a telling us of something that we must know as a thing, it is a fresh knowing of the Lord Jesus. The Lord the Spirit is occupied with teaching us Jesus. However much we may have seen of Him there is still more to see, and in order to see the more, all that we have seen must be made as though it were nothing for the time being, while God is bringing us to the place where we are prepared by Him to see the Lord Jesus in a new way.

"That we may present every man perfect (or complete) in Christ" indicates that completeness for man is God's thought. Completeness begins in Christ Himself personally. He wholly and fully answers to God's thought. The completeness for all others is the completeness which is already in Christ.

Adam was created, and then it was God's thought that in a heavenly sense he should be made complete. Adam fell into a state of ruin and the race in Adam is in that state; but, being brought to the Lord Jesus and by faith united with Him, we start again, at a point where we are capable of being made complete, and there are many things necessary unto that completeness. Redemption is the first thing, and it goes right on to the end. God has His eyes upon one Man who is complete, and He says, in effect, 'Your faith in that One brings you on to the ground of that One'. We came to an end in the death of Christ. Men are prepared

to accept the end of those very embarrassing sins that they want to get rid of, but to be brought to an end of themselves is not always a happy thing. When it is really an end of everything, then God comes in and it is something new. That is the circumcision of Christ - not a pleasant experience (Col. 2:11,12).

Col. 1:20 speaks of reconciliation in Him. In man's heart there is enmity to God. Faith in Christ Jesus brings on to the ground where there is no enmity; He has made peace by the Blood of His Cross. God is disposed to us in love, favourably. He is for us, not against us.

Ephes. 3:12; 2:13. Here we see that boldness is a factor in Him toward completeness. The enmity is all done away. There is an open way to come right in with perfect boldness and confidence.

Ephes. 2:22: "*In whom* ye are builded together..." We need a revelation of Jesus Christ in order to see what God's dwelling place is, and that will mean that we see what Christ is as suitable for God's habitation. Stephen before the Sanhedrin said, 'Moses built Him a tabernacle and Solomon built Him a temple, but the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.' The tabernacle and temple were only types. God is so much greater than tabernacle or temple made with hands can contain. Then Stephen presented Jesus to them. What a tremendous revelation! Now the Apostle says here: "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit". All the suitability that is in Christ is made over to us through faith in Him.

If you have not yet had a revelation of Jesus Christ you will be setting up temples and tabernacles, having ordinances and ritual, and you will attend so often according to arrangement, and you will say of yourself, I am a Church member, I belong to the Church. Listen: God's dwelling place is Jesus Christ, God's sanctuary is Christ and those who are in Christ.

What is true as to our standing, as to what we are, is also true as the governing reality for all movement. It is all a matter of inward revelation of Jesus Christ. God is going to fill this universe with Christ, not with things, not even things about Christ, but with Christ Himself.

The letter to the Ephesians is the revelation of God's full thought from eternity in the counsels of God concerning which He is working. It is brought into this dispensation, but that full thought can only be realised and be fully expressed as

the Church comes into it. This is the way: "That he would grant unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him..."

Chapter 4 - The Nature of God's House

Exodus 32.

It is supremely important for us to be thoroughly convinced of the fact that God is moving in this dispensation particularly in relation to a perfectly prepared plan. The works were prepared, the plan was completed, the purpose was settled and fully defined before this world was, and our calling, and all that is connected with that calling, is according to His eternal purpose. No one, therefore, is free to follow his own judgments, ideas, thoughts, conceptions, mind. All must come in the first place from the Lord and must be born in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. God works all things after the counsel of His own will, and that has to have an expression in the members of Christ.

God is now, according to His eternal purpose, working in relation to a habitation which is central to the universe, and embodies universal features. Then out from the eternal unto the ultimate, God will have a testimony in time. He is working in a concrete way within the compass of this world, and it is in this connection that, under the initiative and direction and mighty energy of the Holy Ghost, the assemblies of which the New Testament speaks came into being. Paul said that at Ephesus he fought with wild beasts. Truly he knew what the principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness are in relation to the Church of God. Then at Philippi there was the working of these forces of evil in a tremendous way to frustrate God's purpose, but the Holy Ghost was there in such energy that the assembly came into being in spite of everything. These assemblies are intended to be local expressions of the eternal purpose and of the ultimate realisation of it. They are expressions of the dwelling place of God constituted by the Holy Ghost.

The Nature of God's House

The passages in Exodus 32, 33, and 40 help to an understanding of this.

In chapter 25 there have been given all the directions concerning this dwelling

place.

Then everything is suspended and all in chapters 32 and 33 comes between the revelation and the execution.

Moses was in the mount for a probationary period (forty days and forty nights), and it was a probation characterised by a real test of one principle, faith. Israel failed in that test, because they wanted to see and have and possess and do. Faith rules all that out. When Israel turned to the tangible, governed by faithless flesh, they opened the door for idolatry. Idolatry is, in essence, the producing of something by the energies of the human soul. It was the movement of their own ambitious souls on the line of nature.

When that came in all that had been given by revelation was suspended until that whole realm of things was dealt with. So Moses took the tent and pitched it without the camp afar off, and called it, "The Tent of Meeting". It speaks of the essentially spiritual nature of the House of God as separated from all the works and emotions of the carnal soul. That is what is meant by holiness.

We have no record of Moses having been instructed concerning this tent. Chapter 33:7 seems to indicate that Moses had done something like this before he had instructions about the tabernacle. He had evidently acted from some spiritual discernment and intelligence as to what was suited to God's dwelling place.

Moses stood in the door of the tent and cried, "Who is on the Lord's side, let him come to me". All the sons of Levi went to him. Then there comes in the essential factor that evil has to be judged before you can have any real expression of the House of God. Moses commanded the sons of Levi to use the sword against their own family in so far as merely natural elements were dictating the course of things. So far as they are operating, to order, to govern, to dictate, those who stand for God's full thought have to bring them under the sword. Hebrews 4:12 will show that this principle is a truly Scriptural one. We have to see that the House of God stands upon the basis of what is purely of God and not of nature.

By this, God is securing the basis of complete victory. Presently these people are coming up against the whole realm of opposing forces, and God is putting things into the realm where those powers have no footing. The defeat of the Church has always been because the enemy has been given an opportunity by reason of

some elements that have been allowed which are foreign to God.

Ephesians gives us an understanding of this. There is the eternal purpose, the House (a habitation of God through the Spirit). That purpose is the one object of the fierce antagonism of the whole hostile realm. The Church has hope of victory only as it is fortified by that which is shown in chapter 6: the helmet of salvation - that which girdles the mind; the breastplate of righteousness - our standing before God in the righteousness of Christ; the shield of faith - that state of faith which comes between us and all the fiery darts of evil suggestion and insinuation. All these things represent a spiritual state.

Moses did not lack the faithfulness that is so essential in order to have the House of God. (Heb. 3:2). He loved these people, but his love did not weaken his faithfulness in dealing with the things that were in the way of the full purpose unto which they were called.

Then we see the positive side. When Moses had pitched the tent afar off, and had faithfully faced the issue without compromise, the Lord talked with him face to face. Here is fellowship, communion, and growing revelation through faithfulness.

Pentecost very largely expresses these types in reality. Under the sword of the Levites three thousand died. Under the sword of the Spirit at Pentecost three thousand were slain in relation to that which was not God's true thought.

In the Old Testament it was judgment unto death.

In the New Testament it was judgment unto life.

At Pentecost they were together in one place, and outside the camp. Firstly, the Lord identified Himself with them there. Secondly, He constituted them the nucleus of His House.

Chapter 5 - Worship in the House of God

Ephes. 1:4-10, 12, 18-19.

Coming back to the book of Exodus we remind ourselves that the tabernacle was intended to set forth the glories of Christ. Moses received the pattern, and others were endued with the Holy Spirit to perform the work. All that went to make the tabernacle was to show the many-sided glories of Christ:

Brass	Righteousness issuing from judgment, the righteousness of Christ.
Silver	Redemption unto God.
Gold	The glory of God.
Blue	Heavenly nature.
Purple	Royalty.
Scarlet	Suffering.
Oil	The witness of the Holy Spirit.
Incense	The worthiness of the Lord Jesus as the ground of communion with God.
Precious stones	The preciousness of the Lord Jesus to the Father.

That is enough to convey the truth that this tabernacle was intended to set forth the glories and excellencies of the Lord Jesus. It is that which the Church, the habitation of God, is intended to be; that which sets forth the glories and values of Christ. There is an end in view, "that we should be unto the praise of His glory"; that the glories of God being manifested in us, in the Sanctuary, in the Church, should bring forth praise to Him.

Worship is praise for His grace and praise for His glory in Jesus Christ - grace leading to glory. Firstly it is grace that makes us a habitation of God, because it provides the necessary conditions for God's presence. Then it is God's work,

through grace, to conform us to the image of His Son, that eventually we shall be to the praise of His glory. That is the full development of the purposes of grace.

Ephesians 1 shows us what God is after, and how He starts where believers are concerned, and what the end is to be - the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 6 brings us into touch with the forces that are opposed.

That which lies between chapter 1 and chapter 6 is all that by which God's end is reached and Satan's object is defeated. There is Divine order in the Body and in the House. Upset the Divine order and the Divine glory disappears. In the order there is God's glory; in the disorder there is God's dishonour. A *living* expression of God's thought in the Church is an object of terrible antagonism on the part of the enemy.

Supremely the House of God is characterised by worship. God has brought it into being for that purpose. When you come into the realm of the *living* Church you come into the living reality of the powers of evil because of worship. Worship is not a form of words, or attitude of body or mind, nor just the singing of hymns. It is such a dwelling in the excellencies of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit that God is being glorified. It is firstly the heart expression of the appreciation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 6 - The Corporate Expression of God's House

The work of the Cross is the basis of God's house. The House of God comes in essentially on the basis that all that is of man is set aside.

Divinely Appointed Headship

Col. 2:19; Heb. 3:6. The first thing is Christ's headship over the Body, over the House. It carries with it universal government, that all the ministries of all the members, their activities, functionings, are all gathered up into the headship of the Lord Jesus. They are all brought together with one another in the Head, so that their relatedness with one another is governed by the headship of the Lord Jesus. We cannot have a right relationship with the Lord and a wrong relationship with another member of the Lord. The headship of Christ is that out of which all else comes and toward which all else moves.

The Sphere of the Full Expression of Headship

In the New Testament as well as in the Old Testament there is a great deal about the function called eldership in the House of God.

When the Lord called to Moses, He told him to bring Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of the children of Israel up into the mount. They were not the judges of Exodus 18, but were heads of tribes and families through whom Moses always communicated with the main body of the people.

The elders were called to the door of the tent of meeting, and Divine communication was through Moses, as the head, to the elders, and then through them to the whole body.

The thought is carried over into the New Testament, and what was typical is now spiritually real and active.

Elders are representative members of the corporate life of God's people, and are

not official as such. When the elders move it is the Church moving, and they have to be in such vital relationship to the corporate company in the Holy Ghost that they carry the Church with them and the Church is found moving by them intelligently. The Lord has laid it down that the Church has to be heard. It is the sphere and vehicle of the utterance of the Head. When it comes to specific action it is the elders who are the particular instrument of expressing the judgment of the Head on behalf of the Church. They cannot act independently; they must represent and carry the Church with them, and the Church on the other hand must, by the Holy Spirit, be in intelligence in life that it may corroborate and work with its representative members.

The headship of the Lord Jesus in a spiritual way comes down through elders, and the Church comes into the headship of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit, when it is a matter of specific function, through the elders. The headship of Christ is expressed, not only over the Church, but in and through the Church. The Church, therefore, is the sphere in which Christ's headship operates as differing from individual, separate units. The headship of Christ embraces all the individuals, but when the Divine order is established the individual will be governed in the Church and not apart from it. The individual line is not capable of reaching God's full end, and if there is a refusal to recognise that, then what is individual begins to fade out, or perhaps come into confusion. We must recognise the sovereignty of God from time to time in doing things with an individual, but it is not His full thought.

Deborah was sovereignly laid hold of because God's fuller thought was not capable of realisation at the time. But God only carries that sovereignty so far, and if He is going to reach through to all that He has in view the individual has to find a place in the corporate: otherwise there are all sorts of perils.

Laying on of Hands

Hebrews 6. This is the basic passage. It is always important to recognise that this is a continuation of chapter 5 and to read from verse 11 of chapter 5 and then on in to chapter 6: "Wherefore let us cease to speak of *the first principles of Christ*..." Christ has entered into that House over which He is also Son. Here are principles which govern the House of God, and they are said to be six, and it is not for any man to say that any one of them can be dropped out. Amongst the six is the laying on of hands. Acts 6:6; 8:17-18; 9:17; 19:6; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6.

Here we have the fact that laying on of hands was an apostolic procedure. What was in the old dispensation implied is now revealed. The peculiar feature of this dispensation is that the whole body of believers, not just special persons, comes under the anointing in this way by the laying on of hands. In the Old Testament hands were laid on special persons who were to occupy certain positions. In this dispensation all members of Christ are regarded as occupying those positions by the same means. All the Lord's people are kings and priests, and the procedure of the laying on of hands in the New Testament means that the whole body of believers comes under the anointing to occupy a certain position before the Lord as represented by the kings and priests of the Old Testament. So it seems that the laying on of hands in the case of those who were baptized was a recognised thing in the Apostolic Church.

There is no command that it shall be done, and that fact has stumbled many people. It is not commanded; it is taken for granted. When we see that it was done and what the result of it was in manifestation we have to come to the conclusion that this stands to speak of *related life*. Now these who have come to the Lord, and have been baptized into Christ, are members - with all other members - of Christ. The very act itself of hands, is an act of identification. It has in view relatedness, oneness. The giving of the hand, the lifting up of the hands is of acknowledgment, recognition.

Ananias said, "Brother Saul". The family is here. Under Christ's headship into which these believers had come there is one anointing from the Head for all His members, and so the anointing was expressed in relation to the act of identification, not of individuals as individuals, but as members of a Body. The Holy Spirit took account of that in laying the foundations for the dispensation in a very conspicuous way.

At times, as the result of that laying on of hands and anointing of the Spirit they spake with tongues, though not invariably, and that meant simply that the Spirit testified to this being something not of this creation but of a universal character which has transcended all the work of Babel. It testifies to the undoing of the dividing work of the Devil at Babel; that is, the Church becomes the embodiment of the great principle that Babel is cast down. The Church of God always stands over against Babel and Babylon, and the works represented in Babylon are destroyed in the House of God. Tongues were for a sign. It is interesting and significant that where there is the counterfeit of the Spirit in

tongues, there is a contradiction of the meaning and Babel conditions come in; not glory, but shame.

Divine Order in the House

Order in the House of God is the thing about which we are speaking. Order is a most important thing in relation to protection and covering; that is, the safety of the individual members of Christ is bound up with their relatedness to one another in a corporate life. The assembly is essential to the safety of the individual in a spiritual way.

1 Cor. 11:9. Ephes. 5:22-24. 1 Cor. 11:10,12.

At Corinth there were disorders, and the Apostle was seeking to correct those disorders and to have the Lord's order established. We have to look at everything in the House of God from the standpoint of Divine order, not just the matter of the place of individuals. If there is disorder the enemy is going to have an advantage, to do mischief and to do us harm, and we shall be smitten.

There is an order in heaven, and the Church here is expressive of that order. Exodus 23:20: "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way... take ye heed of him... provoke him not: for he will not pardon your transgression..." This angel represents government from heaven and he has to be recognised, otherwise there is an upsetting of heavenly order and you become exposed and suffer.

Daniel 4:13,17,23: "...the decree of the watchers..." Then there is that peculiar clause in Paul's writings: "...because of the angels..." Covering is related to heavenly order for protection. Headship is that. It seems that God has given a custodianship to heavenly bodies, the watchers, and they are watching to see the heavenly order preserved, and when heavenly authority is set aside and violated it is as though the covering were removed from the head and a smiting results.

This is brought into the assembly, and down to relationships, the man the head of the woman, as Christ is the Head of the Church. It means there is a heavenly order here, expressed in these relationships, and if that order is upset there is exposure, the head is uncovered. The head covering of a woman is a sign that she has protection, but if she sets aside that Divine order and assumes the place which God has not given, she exposes herself to deception and to mischief. That

does not apply only to man and woman, woman and man, but follows right through. If God has set in the Church in man-form an oversight and there is a refusal to acknowledge it, it is like the Church taking off its cover, and where that happens the individual or the company is bound to be smitten. I believe that is the principle behind Dathan and Abiram and their company.

An assembly governed by the Holy Spirit is of immense value to the Lord in every way, and of immense value to the individual members; for the Church can come alongside them.

This carries with it the necessity for our being in subjection in the House of God, every one of us. Subjection to the Lord is subjection in the place where the headship primarily operates, and it is subjection in the House.

Col. 2:19: Order is the basis of spiritual increase. This order, leading to growth, means intelligence in the presence of spurious movements and doctrines. (Ephes. 4:12-14).

Finally, order is a military idea, so the book of Numbers would teach. Until the Lord's people are ordered there is no hope of the enemy being cast out.

The primary thing, then, is the headship of Christ; then the government of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in the saints; then the holding fast the Head. All this upon the basis of the Cross, that the personal and the self and all that is of nature has been brought under the Cross and set aside.

Chapter 7 - The Great Altar

From a Series of Meditations in the Book of Exodus

Reading: Exodus 27:1-8; Hebrews 10:3-10; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Timothy 2:5-6.

We come now to the next thing in the order as set forth in this part of the book; that is, the great altar, and we notice that we move now from the door of the sanctuary right to the gateway of the court, the first place of any contact with God, and that is at the altar.

That movement is a complete movement. There is that which, as we saw in our last meditation, stands between, a thing of very great importance, but it is not mentioned here. We are taken right from the door to the altar, and that carries its own great spiritual significance.

The Goal is First Brought into View

God has from His side commenced with the sanctuary, because God always begins with His end. That is to say, He brings His final object into view, and then works toward that. And so He has brought the sanctuary first into view, set it forth and dealt with it, and then He moves out to deal with that which leads to it.

The Church - Christ and His members in perfect union and glory - is God's supreme object. That is God's end, and with that God begins. You will notice that whenever you are contemplating things from God's side that is His method. When things are contemplated from our side the method is reversed. You take the letter to the Ephesians, for instance, and there you have everything contemplated from God's side, that is, from the heavenly standpoint. This, indeed, is the difference between the writings of Peter and Paul. Peter's writings contemplate us as pilgrims and strangers on the earth: Paul's writings contemplate us as already seated together in the heavenlies in Christ. One is the earthly aspect of things, and the other is the heavenly. The one presents things as viewed from our position; the other presents things as viewed from God's position. So that when you take up the letter to the Ephesians you are viewing

things entirely from the Divine standpoint, and what you find right at the commencement of that letter is the Church as represented in completeness before the foundation of the world. You must remember that all that is in the letter to the Ephesians bears a corporate character. It is a corporate law that governs the whole letter, and while it is of individual application, all that is said there is said in a corporate and related sense. Thus when it says at the outset we were "chosen in him before the foundation of the world", it is a reference to the Church. It is the Church that was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world; from the Divine standpoint you have the end at the beginning. Before anything else in the way of process is dealt with you have the end presented, and God always starts with His end. He always introduces what He is finally after and then begins to work toward that. So in this order in the book of Exodus, the first order as unfolded here (for you will have the order changed later) it is God speaking, not man making. You have the sanctuary mentioned, and then you move to that which points to the sanctuary, the way into the sanctuary.

The Cross (Altar) the Way of Realization

The point is that the Church is God's supreme object. That is God's end. But now the Church is only possible by the Cross. The Church demands the Cross both for its existence and for its character. It is the Cross which makes the Church possible as an entity, and it is the Cross which gives the Church its essential character. In other words, the Church is based upon what the Cross means.

Now that is our great point at this time; to that we have to come back; with that everything is related. The Cross issues in the Church; otherwise it has missed its meaning. It is intended to lead on to the Church. The Church is based upon the Cross; otherwise it is not God's Church, not the Church according to God's thought. We see, then, why there is this direct movement from the door of the sanctuary right through the court to the very gate, where we find the great altar.

The altar is said to be the place where God comes out to speak with sinful man. It is not the same speaking as in the Most Holy Place, where it is a matter of fellowship, communion, and the revelation of His heart to man for man's government, for the direction of his life, for the bringing of man into all the thought of God. That is the speaking in the Most Holy Place. But here it is another kind of speaking, shall we say, a more elementary speaking, a speaking that has to do with foundations. You will see this if you turn to Exodus 29:42-44. This is what is said: "I will meet with the children of Israel there". It is God

coming out. In the case of the Most Holy Place it is man coming in, but this is God coming out, and the altar is the place at which God comes out in grace to sinful man. The very dimensions and constitution of the altar speak of that truth. He speaks in grace to sinful man.

Now the altar is five cubits by five cubits, and three cubits high, and it is made of brass. Five is the number that typifies grace, as we have seen, three is Divine perfection or Divine fulness, while brass stands for judgment unto righteousness. There are all the terms of grace. God (that is three); grace (that is five); brass (that is judgment unto righteousness). God speaks, but He speaks, as that passage in Timothy shows, in connection with one who has mediated between God and man by the offering of Himself a sacrifice, one who has given Himself for sin, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God. So that what God says at the altar, as He comes out to sinful man, is concerning righteousness provided on the ground of sin atoned for. Pardon, peace, reconciliation, are the words of grace in which He speaks to sinful man in the great altar. This is the foundation of the sanctuary, the first thing in relation to the Church. The Church is built on that; the Church takes its character from that; the Church has its existence because of that; that leads to the Church, makes the Church possible.

But that is not all. We have to get inside all that and see really what it means, and note how comprehensive and inclusive the altar is.

The Supreme Meaning of the Altar (Cross)

In the first place it is the altar of whole burnt-offering. Other kinds of offerings will also be offered upon it, as, for example, the sin-offering and the trespass offering, each having its own significance, but it is primarily the altar of whole burnt-offering. The whole burnt-offering was one which all went up to God. Nothing was reserved from this offering, but all was consumed. The one and only issue of every such offering was that God smelled a sweet savour, that a cloud of smoke went up to God, and that is all there is of it. After that only ashes remained; it was a whole burnt-offering. We are speaking of the comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of this altar.

Then the size of it is also significant. It is not a small thing. To convey some idea of the size of this altar, let me remind you that all the vessels of the Holy Place could be placed inside this altar; the table of shewbread, the candlestick, the

golden altar, all could be fitted inside this brazen altar. It was large enough to comprehend them all. That is not merely a technical fact, but there is a relatedness in this; for all those things are spiritually found to be bound up with this altar. They have their place in this altar, and in a spiritual sense they are the outcome of this altar. All that the table, and the lampstand, and the golden altar stand for comes out of this great altar, has its virtue there. This is a comprehensive thing, and an all-inclusive thing.

What, then, is the meaning of it? What is the comprehensiveness? Hebrews 10 explains what the comprehensiveness of this altar is. Verse 8 presents a summary of our Lord's judgment of the order He found on His coming into the world. "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifice for sin thou wouldest not... which are offered according to the law". That is a reference to this repeated offering of sacrifices under the law. "Then said he..." When? When He recognised that this sort of thing was not getting to God's end, was not effecting God's purpose. All these offerings, and the blood of bulls and of goats, were not taking away sin, nor producing a conscience void of offence toward God. All this was only typical, and without real inward virtue, power, dynamic. There was no deliverance, and really it was not bringing man to God. Then, when He recognised that, when He knew that, "Then said he (now He is coming to put something in the place of all that, to do something which gets to the end appointed by God, indicated by all that, but never reached by it) Lo I come to do thy will, O God". What is the great altar? What is the inclusiveness and comprehensiveness of the great altar? It stands to speak of God's will wholly and perfectly done.

Now that is comprehensive. It says this: The will of God involves, implies, carries with it, utterness for God. All goes up to God; there is nothing left but ashes; all is utterly for God. That is the altar, and that is the will of God. The will of God is a comprehensive thing. It bounds the universe. God projected His will concerning His Son, and there was another will which rose up in this universe against that will of God and said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God"; "I will be like the Most High". That was the expression of a will that is against the will of God concerning His Son. The asserting of that other will against the will of God meant the rending and rifting of a heavenly order, and Satan in whom that other will was found was hurled down with his hosts. Now the next appearance is of Satan coming to God's creation, to man, and by way of the mind and the heart, the reason and the desire, reaching the will of Adam. He besieged the will. Adam surrendered his will to Satan, and so the whole race in Adam had

introduced into it a will that is contrary to the will of God, and it is manifested and expressed in this way, that man is not controlled by God: he is for himself; and that means that he is for the Devil. There is another will, and we cannot get away from the fact.

It does not matter how far we go on with God, even though it be to the point of our becoming the most saintly, we never reach the point where, in some further revelation of God, making increased demands upon us, it is not necessary for us to surrender our will anew, to have a new dealing with God in the realm of our will. To put that in the reverse way is to say that right to the end it is possible for us to have a reservation from God, and to choose another way. There is that other will in this universe.

Now the Lord Jesus came into the world deliberately in relation to the will of God as against that other will, and His whole life is marked by this principle, this law, "Not my will, but thine" - "I delight to do thy will, O my God": "I am come to do thy will". It is not just a question of seeking to know the will of God in daily affairs; it is an attitude of heart which says comprehensively, embracing all details in its sweep, 'I am here in relation to the will of God, and I am utterly abandoned to that great will of God; and that means that God must have everything'. That is the whole burnt offering. God must have everything; not a place but the whole place, not things but all.

That is the meaning of the Cross. That is the meaning of the altar. It is upon that the Church stands, and from that it takes its character, and it is in relation to that the Holy Spirit assumes control. The Holy Spirit assumes control of the believer on the ground of the Cross, and He assumes that the believer is consecrated wholly to God and proceeds accordingly. If ever He comes up against any hitch in us He says, in effect, "Well, I was simply going on with what I have come for. If you do not want Me to do that, then our relationship in a practical way must be suspended until you come to the altar, until you accept the real meaning of the Cross which you profess to have accepted". The whole will of God is fundamental. It is not something that we come to later in life, and which we term the higher life, or the life of holiness, or the deeper spiritual life, or something like that. It is fundamental. From God's standpoint the Cross means utterness for God, and it is this the Holy Spirit assumes when we accept the Cross, and He deals with us accordingly.

This word in Romans 12:1-2 comes right to the point: "I beseech you, therefore,

brethren, by the mercies of God (the mercies of God are because of His having found a propitiation for sins, a mediator between God and man: upon that ground, because of the mercies of God I beseech you) to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (spiritual worship); and be not fashioned according to this age: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may *prove* what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God".

The Whole Burnt-offering and the Believer

Now you notice that there is a difference here. The Apostle is not saying, 'You must do what Christ did, and on the same basis'. Christ presented His body a living sacrifice as an atonement, a propitiation. The Apostle does not say that we are to do that, but He marks the difference in this way. He says that when the Lord Jesus did that He did it to perfect the will of God concerning man, to make the will of God perfect in a Man. Now to us he says, 'You present yourselves upon that basis, not as a propitiation, an atonement, but as a freewill offering, as a praise offering, your spiritual worship, something that is presented to God upon the basis of Christ's full offering'. Then what will happen is that you will come to know that the will of God is not something irksome, difficult, hard, painful, but good, perfect, acceptable. You come into the blessing of the will of God on the ground of Christ having perfectly accomplished that will through suffering. But the point that the Apostle brings out is this: You have to come alongside the Lord Jesus, and be as it were the complement of His sacrifice, His offering of Himself. He offered in relation to the will of God a propitiation, an atonement: you enter into that perfected will of God in Christ, and you find that the will of God which before was so hard, so costly, and against you all the time because the will of God was not in you, has now become a life, a blessing. The will of God has been done by one Man, and you come into the good of a perfect will of God.

I wonder if that is clear. I think we can leave the detail, at any rate in the outworking, and note this, that we are called upon here by the Lord to stand right into the good of what the Lord Jesus has done in relation to God's will. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice..." That is to say, come alongside the Lord Jesus and enter into all that He has done in presenting Himself by presenting yourself. In so doing you come to inherit the good of a perfectly satisfied will of God, and you find that the will of God is now a thing *for* you and not *against* you, a thing working in you and not in opposition to you. You are in the will of God. We are

called upon to stand in exactly the same position as the Lord Jesus stands in today; that is, of a whole, and utter, and entire abandonment to God.

The Will of God Absolute

Note this verse in Hebrews: "The offering of the body of Christ once for all". Then mark the similar expression in the letter to the Romans: "the offering up of the Gentiles". The altar is in view. On the one Christ is offered to God for God's pleasure, for God's satisfaction, in relation to the will of God, which must not be regarded partially but as God's complete right in the universe. On the other it is man coming into that offering of Christ and being offered to God. The offering up of the Gentiles in Christ, to be wholly for God, is being wholly in the will of God. Now that offering up on the part of Christ makes it possible for us to know how good, perfect and acceptable the will of God is. God's will is all-governing, and from the Divine standpoint there are no degrees of the will of God, it is absolute. The matter of spiritual progress is another thing, but let us remember that God always starts from His end, and that sanctuary represents God's end reached. Now He comes to work, as it were, to His end, but His end is fixed. God will never leave anyone at the altar, if He has His way. God will never leave anyone midway in the court. There are no degrees in the will of God.

God starts from the absolute and works in relation to the absolute, and one of the tragedies of the Lord's people is that they have not really seen that, when they have but accepted parts, fragments; when they have come to the Cross and accepted the atonement for their sins, pardon, remission, the privilege of reconciliation and peace with God, and have stopped short there. That has become the measure of their life; they have no more than that; they have not gone on. That means that the Holy Spirit has not been able to go on with His essential work toward God's end. Do remember this, that God's end is the sanctuary, not the Cross. God's beginning is the Cross, His end is the sanctuary, and He begins from His end. When we speak of the sanctuary we mean that in which God has fully expressed His mind, His purpose. And God by His Spirit would call us on, ever on. The trouble with the Hebrews was not that they had failed to lay the foundation, but that they had progressed no further. "Let us... press on unto perfection (full growth), not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God", and so on, was the exhortation that was addressed to them. The way of God is that we should go on to His end, the end with which He started.

Do not let us be content, however glorious and great may be what we call the evangel of sins forgiven, of acceptance with God, the atonement and assurance of heaven. That is only the beginning. There is an infinite fulness beyond that to which God is calling His people. The Cross is essential to that, but the Cross is meant to take us to it, not to hold us to itself. Although all the way along in the progressive experience the Cross will be applied to bring us to God's fulness, nevertheless the end which governs is God's full end, as set forth in the sanctuary.

The challenge of the altar at this time is, Who is going to have us? And how much of us is God to have? That is the question at the altar. Whose are we, and how much of us is going to be possessed by the one to whom we give ourselves? That is the challenge of the Cross, the challenge of Calvary, and there we have to decide in a conclusive and inclusive way: God is going to have us, and God is going to have us utterly, and we are never accepted on any other ground. It is a denial of the Cross to be what is called a worldly Christian. It is a denial of the Cross to be a selfish Christian. Christ is the example of what the Cross means in life here: "utterly for God".

Now what we are saying is that we have to accept that fundamentally, and that is what we profess to have done in our baptism. In being baptised we have declared that we are now utterly for God. We have stood on those words of the Holy Spirit through the Apostle: "We thus judge, that one died for all (in the stead of all), therefore all died (in him); and he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him..." Now our baptism has been our public declaration of that: 'not unto ourselves'; 'henceforth unto Him'. We mean that in an utter way. Well now, the process and the progressive thing is that God is going to work that out. Our thought must not be of accepting that in the future; our acceptance of it is made already, and we have to stand by it, and at every new crisis we have to say, 'Yes, but this was included in the initial act. Lord, I meant this when I first took my stand, so there is no room for any reservation. I meant it; You work it out, Lord'. And the Lord will simply be working progressively now in relation to the inclusive thing which He meant and which He took us to mean. He will work it out until the point is reached where our wills are utterly one with His will. That is the altar.

May the Lord have less difficulty with us in bringing us to the place which we have accepted in our acceptance of the Cross; but may He bring us right through by that way to His fulness, and His working of the Cross in us be unto His

working of the fuller and ever fuller life of His glorified Son in us.